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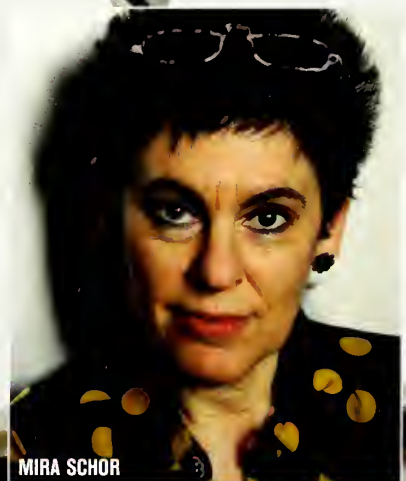
us \$10 canada \$14
volume 25
annual issue 2010/11

**25TH
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE**

featuring
**ANNE BERNAYS
& MIRA SCHOR**



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X on Circle in the Square (Q4-81 #2), 1981, Acrylic on canvas, 49 x 45 inches © The Estate of Jack Tworikov



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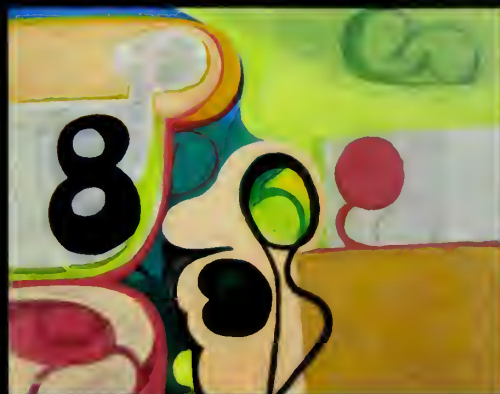
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Sarah Lutz, 2009-2010, *My Collection*, Oil On Panel, 21" X 17"



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SUMMER 2010

July 2 - July 21

BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR: Gallery Artists and Invited Guests

Eric Aho, Jay Critchley, Peter Hutchinson, Peik Larsen, Sarah Lutz, Lucas Moran, Daniel Ranalli, Andy Rosen, Sue McNally, Tabitha Vevers. Guests: Mary Behrens, Trudy Benson, Diego Benavente, Erik den Breejen, Quentin Curry, Anahi DeCanio, Kent Dorn, Andrew Guenther, Peter Allen Hoffmann, Susan Jennings, Kahn/Selesnick, David Humphrey, Jeremy Kost, Hash Halper, Monique Lai, Thomas McDonnell, Francie Randolph, Lance Rautzhan, Max Razdow, Caris Reid, Ali Smith, Jessica Tam, Russell Tyler

July 28 - August 11

Jay Critchley, Peik Larsen, Sarah Lutz, Mary Behrens

August 13 - September 1

Peter Hutchinson, Daniel Ranalli, Tabitha Vevers, and a group show curated by Russell LaMontagne and Richard Baiano

September 3 - September 24

Eric Aho, Monique Lai, Sue McNally, Andy Rosen

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SUMMER SALON



Jack Tworlov, *OC #51*, 1959, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches © Copyright the Estate of Jack Tworlov

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SUMMER | 2010

REOPENING CELEBRATION

of the Days Lumberyard Building
Saturday, July 10, 6:30pm
Ticketed. Includes opening of *Days Lumberyard Studios 1915-1972* exhibition, dinner, and dancing.
Exhibition runs July 10 to August 3

SCHOR ON TWORKOV

Saturday, August 7, 8pm
Mira Schor reading from *The Extreme of the Middle: Writings of Jack Tworkov* (2009)

AUCTION PREVIEW EXHIBITION

Opening Reception
Friday, August 6, 6-8pm
with wine tasting hosted by Truro Vineyards
Exhibition runs August 6 to 20

34th ANNUAL ART AUCTION

Saturday, August 21
new time 4:30-8:30pm

For a complete list of all events, including readings and artist talks, please visit:
fawc.org/events



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Paul Resika, *Pilgrim Monument*, 1985, oil on paper, 15.5" x 23"
image courtesy of Acme Fine Art, Boston

SUMMER PROGRAM

WEEKLONG WORKSHOPS IN WRITING & THE VISUAL ARTS

June 12 — August 20

2010 FACULTY INCLUDES

Amy Arbus, Henri Cole, Cornelius Eady, Emily Eveleth, Lauren Ewing, Nick Flynn, Julia Glass, Kimiko Hahn, Louise Hamlin, Terrance Hayes, Barkley Hendricks, Pam Houston, Marie Howe, Peik Larsen, Ariel Levy, Constantine Manos, Josip Novakovich, Marisa Silver, Dan Welden, Penn Young

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Anne Peretz

EXHIBITIONS

EDWARD HOPPER drawings JACK TWORKOV paintings

ROBERT FISHER paintings ANNE PERETZ paintings LARRY COLLINS paintings
MISCHA RICHTER photographs GILBERT FRANKLIN sculpture PETER WATTS paintings
ART about ARCHITECTURE Members 12 x 12 Silent Auction

PROGRAMS and EVENTS

PAAM Consignment Auction: June 12, Sept 18

12th Annual Secret Garden Tour: July 11

Fredi Schiff Levin Lecture Series filmArt@PAAM Dick Miller & Friends Jazz

Bart Weisman & Guests Jazz Blue Door Chamber Music concerts Gala

PAAM Circle special events ...and more!

The Lillian Orlowsky / William Freed MUSEUM SCHOOL at PAAM

Art Classes and Workshops given from June—September.



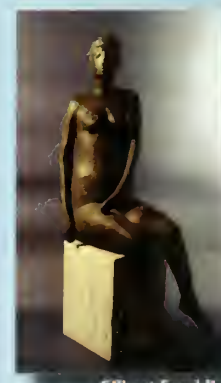
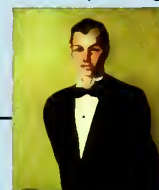
Jack Tworkov



Edward Hopper



Larry Collins



Gilbert Franklin



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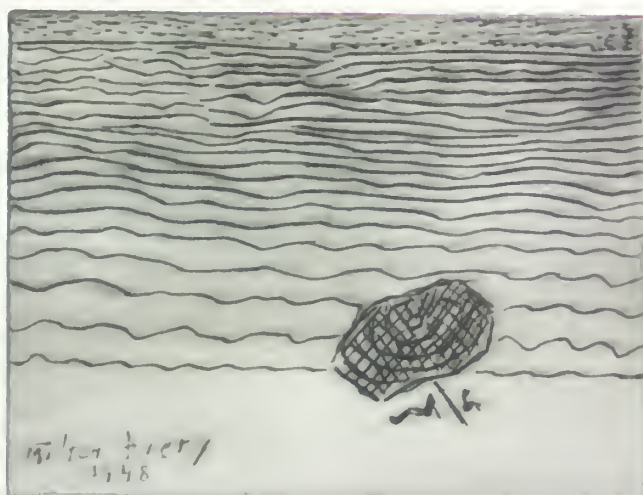
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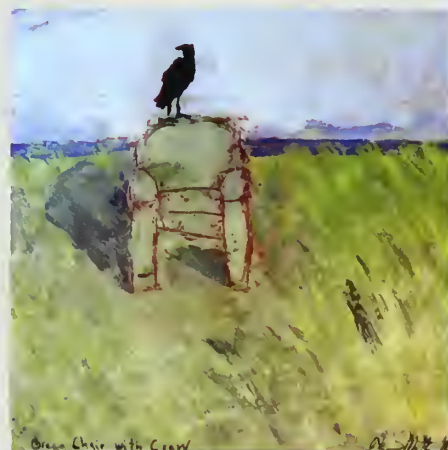
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Watercolor by Carlo Delucia, Untitled, 13" x 18"

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WILLIAM AND LUCY L'ENGLE IN CONTEXT



William J. L'Engle (1884-1957), *Madeleine and Thelma*, 1930

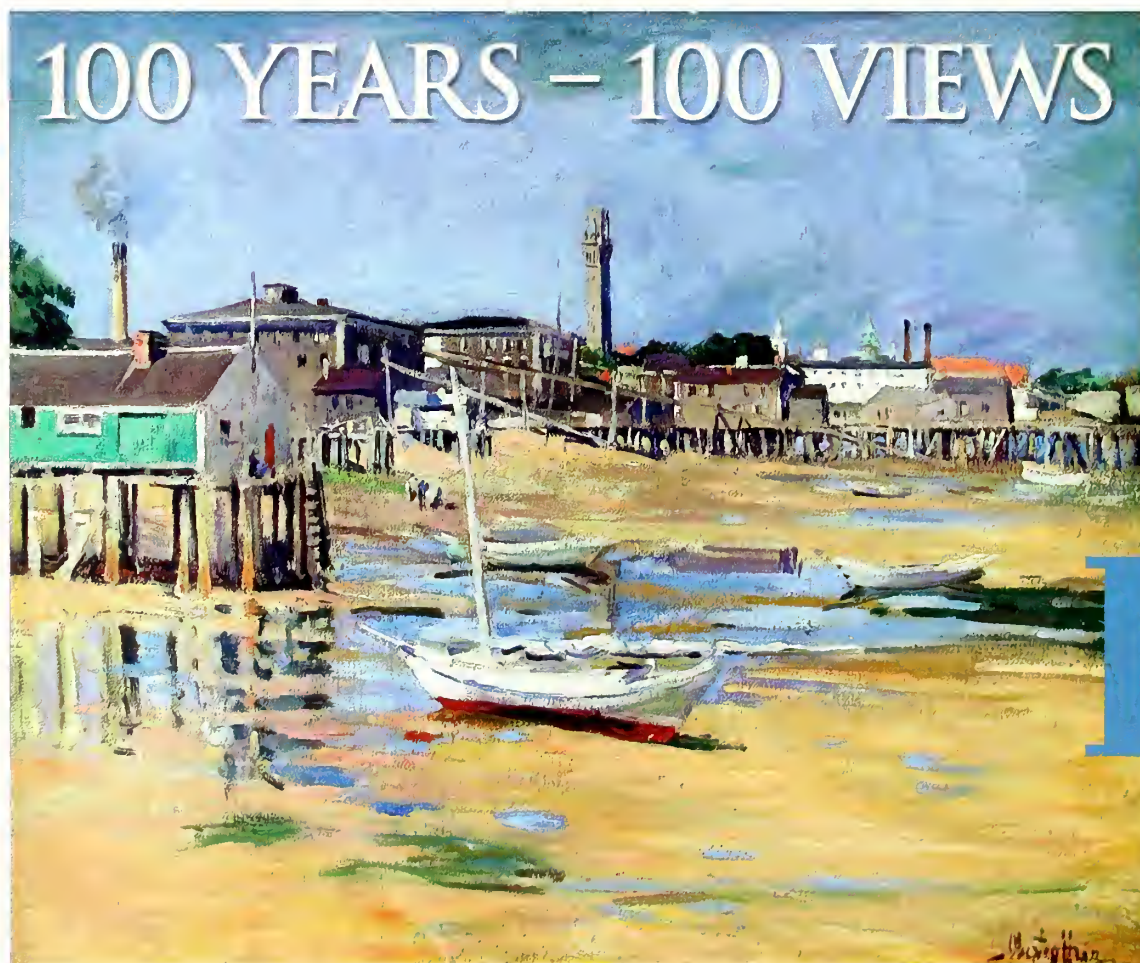


Lucy Brown L'Engle (1889-1978), *Still Life*, 1927

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George Oberteuffer, *On the Beach, Provincetown* — Collection of Napi and Helen Van Dereck.



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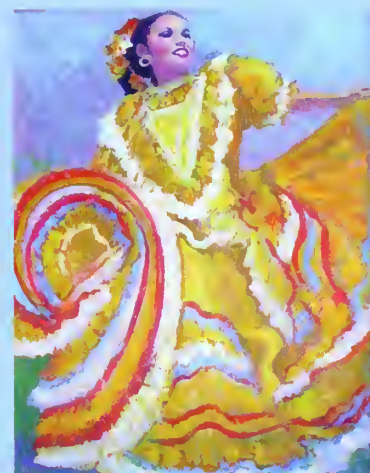
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Edel Bordon, Untitled, 2010

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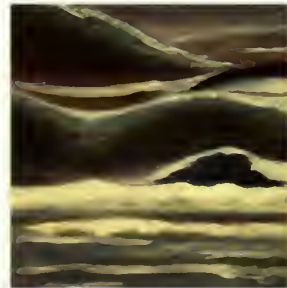


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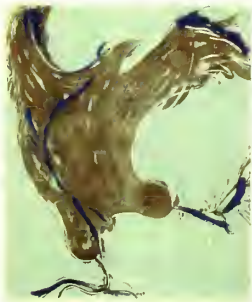


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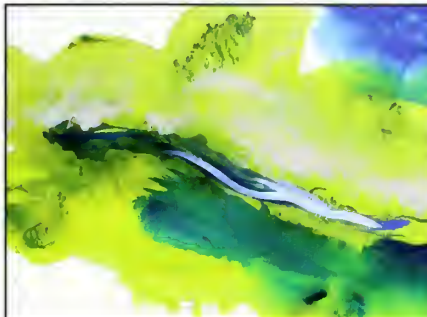
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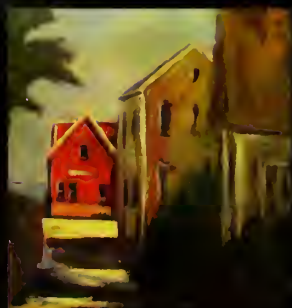


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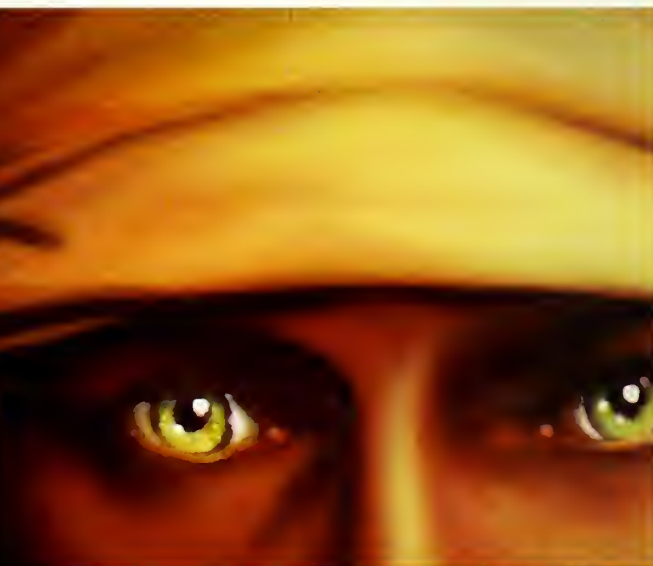


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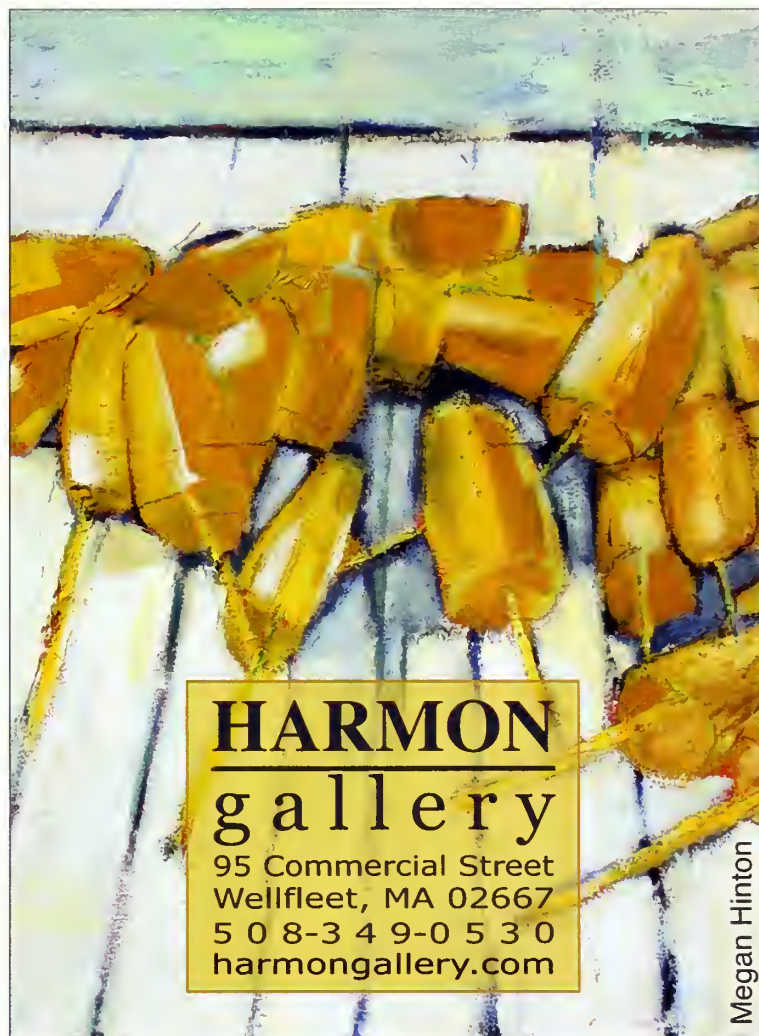
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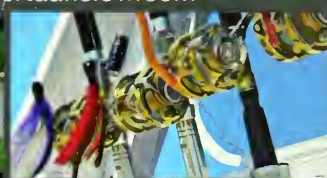
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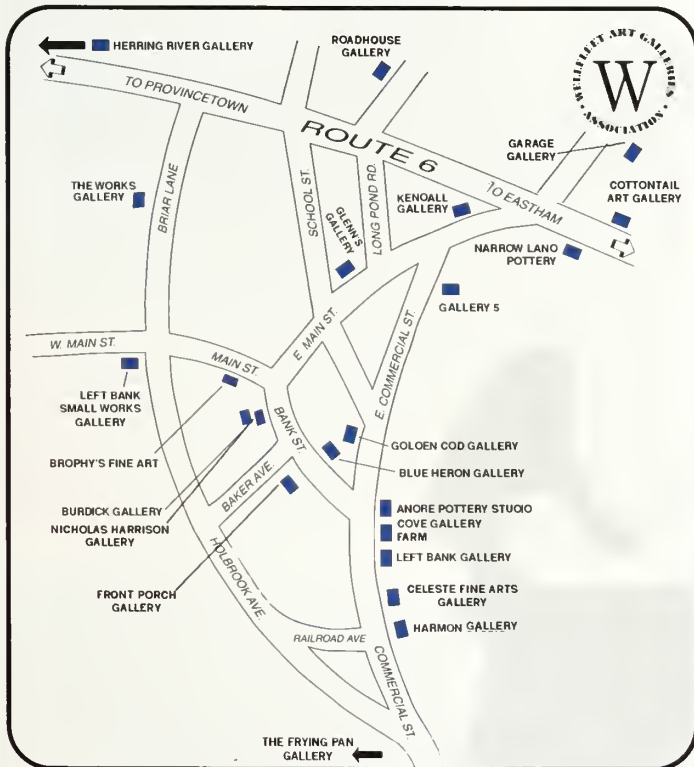
Jlang Peng, The Winer, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 150 cm

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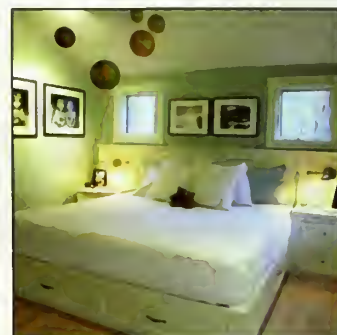
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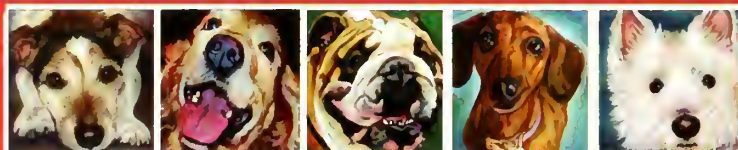


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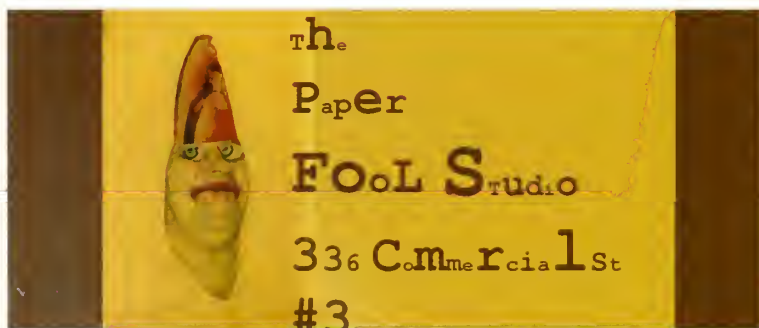


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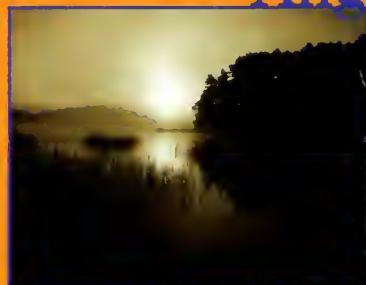


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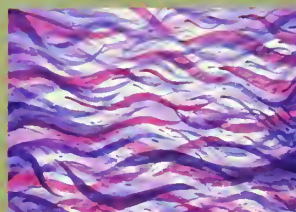


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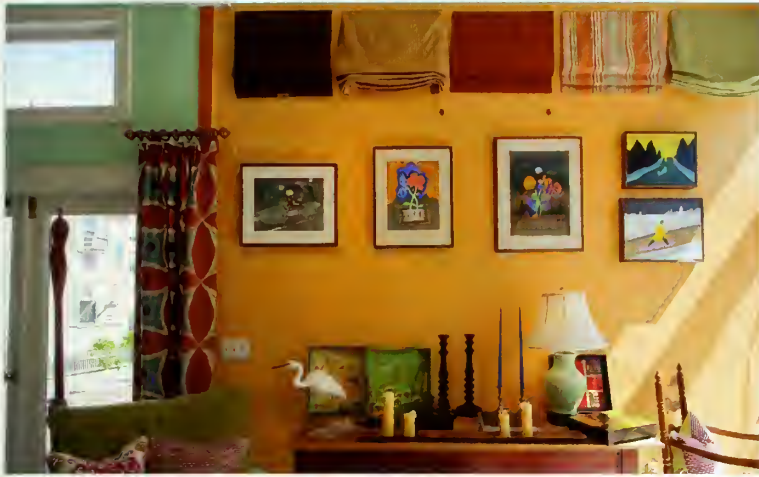
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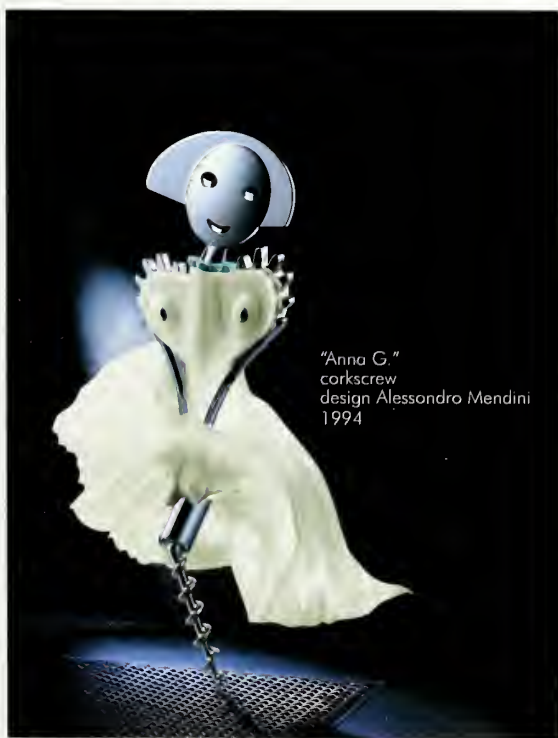
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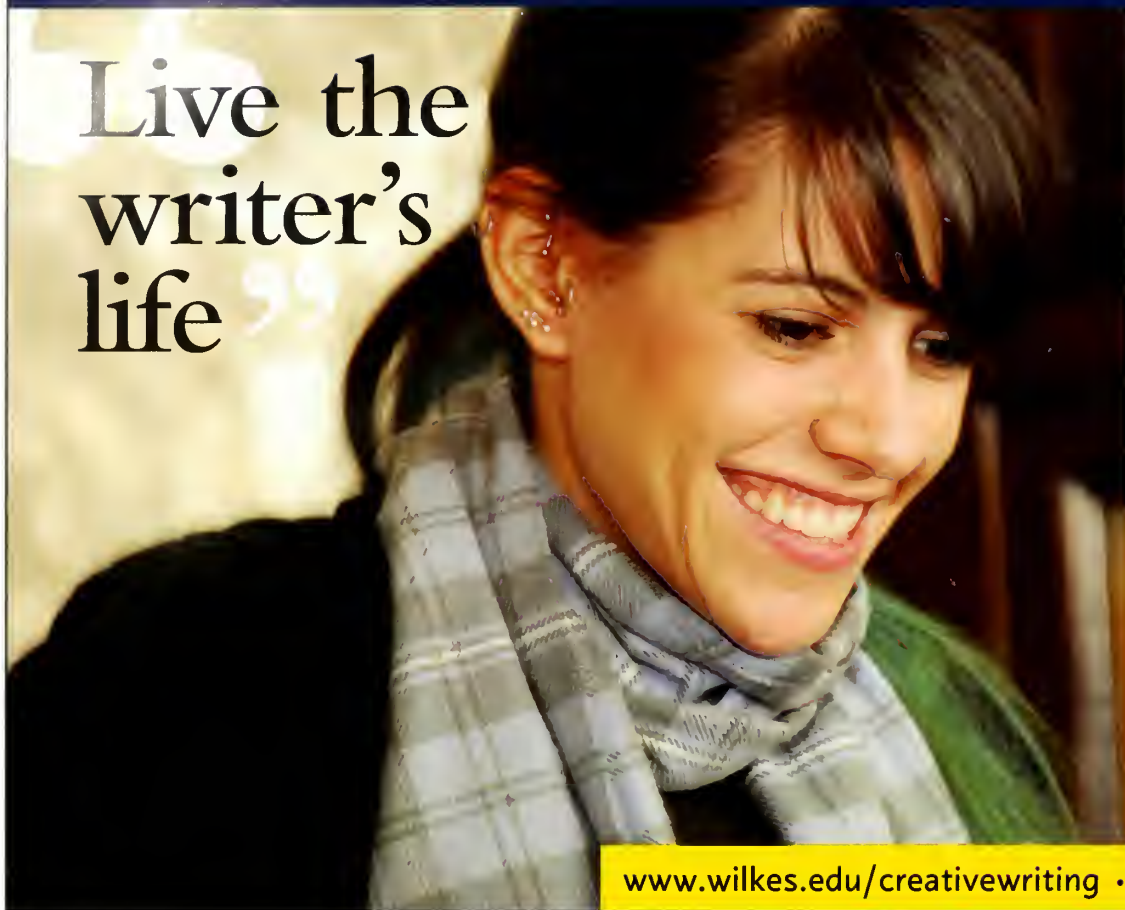


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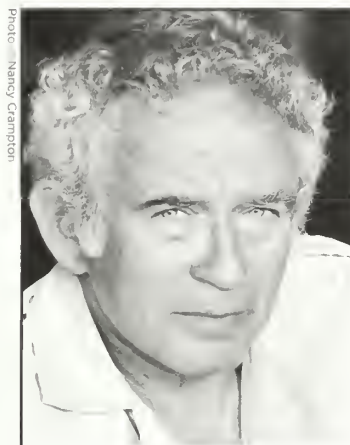
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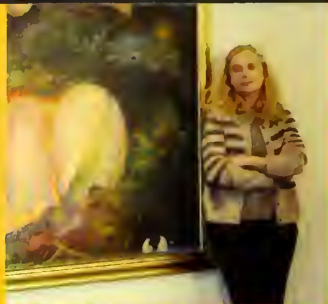
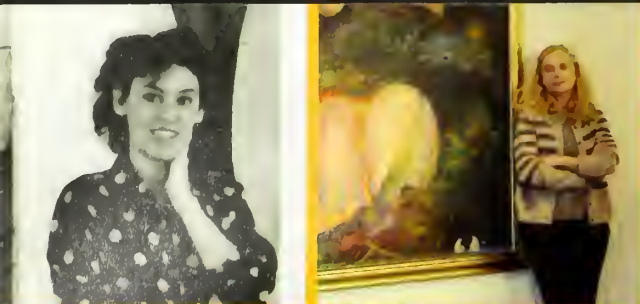
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Mira Schor *Photograph by Julia Dault*

Anne Bernays *Photograph by Phil Smith*

Mira Schor, *A Walk (detail)*, 2009, ink and gesso on linen, 16 by 20 inches



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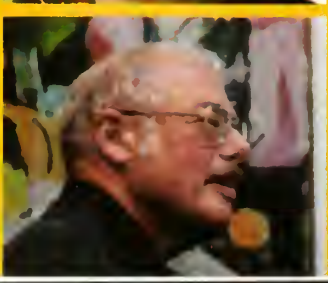
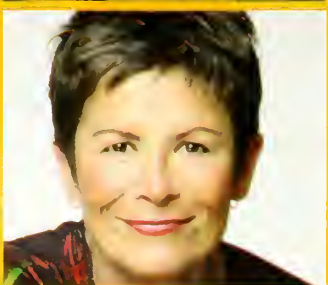
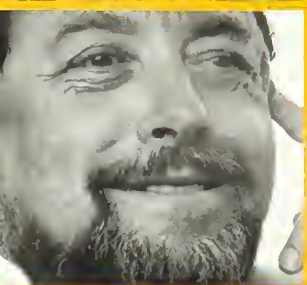
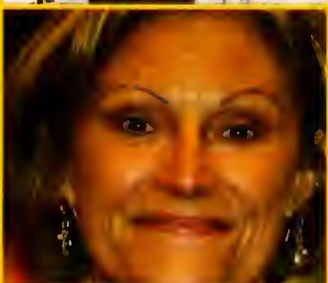
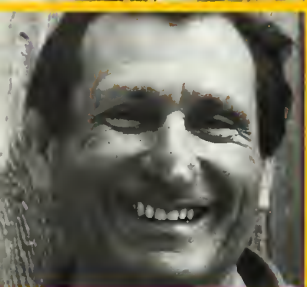


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PROVINCETOWN ARTS

A publication of Provincetown Arts Press, Inc.,
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Most of *Provincetown Arts* is freelance written. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome and will be considered between October and January. Enclose SASE for writers' guidelines. The best guide for content and length is a study of past issues.

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PRINTED IN USA

NATIONAL AND CANADA DISTRIBUTION:
Ingram Periodicals, Nashville, TN

ISSN: 1053-5012

Printed by Reynolds-DeWalt in New Bedford, MA

ARTISTS

Rebecca Bruyn's image of the Pilgrim Monument in Provincetown casts its shadow—as Emerson declared, “an institution is the lengthened shadow of a man”—suggesting that founders of enduring conceptions are strong individuals. Bruyn's cyanotype print is grounded in an iron-salt mixture combined with organic matter, forming a blue hue. A negative is made and dried in sunlight. Bruyn's antique homage to the Pilgrim Monument comes on the occasion of the centennial of its completion in August 2010. In 1910, President Taft sailed across the bay from the summer White House in Beverly and anchored in Provincetown harbor, near where the Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact, to dedicate the newly completed structure. The image was chosen by Truro Vineyards as a wine label for this year's town-wide celebration, which will take place on August 5.

Barbara Cohen's new book of embellished photographs, *New York Love Affair* (Fields Publishing) is a tribute to Honey Kay, with whom Cohen spent summers at their bayside home in Provincetown. Cohen's sense of loss for her spouse is connected with longing for the structures related to the experiences they shared together, which are now inflected with the paint of emotional memory. In his introduction to the book, Michael Cunningham ponders the images: “Sometimes the bolder experiments are the ones that don't look like experiments at all. What Cohen does with this collection of altered photographs is a more radical gesture than it may appear at first to be. She's insisting on New York City as a dowager queen, no longer young but all the more marching erect, in full regalia, into middle age.” Pictured here is the New York tavern that inspired the Provincetown Inn by the same name.

Jack Coughlin has completed a new book of ink-and-pastel drawings of jazz greats, *Portraits in Blues and Jazz*, which extends the series he began with *A Brush with the Blues*, published in 1997 (jackjr@art.umass.edu). The value of this book is increased by the astute commentary of Steven Tracy, Professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, where Coughlin taught art. Tracy offers the context for Coughlin's talent in transforming the mood of the blues into the hollows of the artists' faces, as well as for the circumstances that produced this uniquely American art form that offered a melancholy joy in the face of Jim Crow. Tracy describes the blues as if he were speaking about Coughlin's visual work: “The vocal and inflectional manipulation, including growling, buzzing, and straining to achieve emotional tension and complexity; the manner of stretching—flattening and conflating—the boundaries of pitches in improvisational and organically decorative fashion.” The connection between the blues and jazz is explored in the forthcoming book; in the introduction, Frederick Tillis informs us: “Among the duties of the slaves was to provide entertainment for their masters and their own efforts in work. Hence, calls, hollers, cries, shouts, coon songs, as well as work and play songs.”

Maurice Freedman, who worked in Province-



REBECCA BRUYN'S CYANOTYPE



ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM
THE FORMATIVE YEARS 1946-1948
FOREWORD BY SUSAN LANDAUER



BARBARA COHEN, WHITE HORSE TAVERN,
FROM "NEW YORK LOVE AFFAIR"



JACK COUGHLIN, MUDDY WATERS, 2009

town for part of his career, is enjoying a posthumous resurgence of his reputation, with exhibitions at D. Wigmore Fine Art in New York, Acme Fine Art in Boston, the Ogunquit Museum of American Art in Maine, and at the Julie Heller Gallery in Provincetown. Often compared with Marsden Hartley and Winslow Homer, he was praised last winter in *ARTnews*: “Freedman's extraordinary ability to convey the energy and severity of life along Maine's coastline make clear he should be recognized as a modernist master.”

John Grillo, a distinguished veteran of the major American art movement of the forties, is the subject of a new book, *Grillo: Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years 1946-1948*, with a foreword by Susan Landauer (Fields Publishing/PAAM). The Wellfleet artist, now in his eighties, made a crucial decision in 1946, and chose to join the West Coast school of Abstract Expressionism in San Francisco, which developed individual strains, yet shared many of the same impulses that arose with the artists of that generation, some of whom, like Grillo, were returning from war as seasoned artists. Stationed in Okinawa during World War II, Grillo, deprived of materials and cognizant of Surrealist automatic or chance methods of working, began to use coffee grounds for Miró-like images that he tied together with washes, using a similar drip technique as Jackson Pollock, but with no knowledge, at the time, of Pollock. Between 1946 and 1948, Grillo produced the watercolors reproduced in this book. The tense angst of Pollock has a happy contrast in the exuberance of Grillo.

Edward Hopper reemerges this summer with a first-time look at never-before-seen early drawings, showing unusual precocity in work done as young as age ten. These precise sketches are inflected with the loneliness that made the adult artist famous. They arrive here this summer for an exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in partnership with Bruce Loch, director of the Thurston Royce Gallery in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and the Berta Walker Gallery. In the exhibition catalogue, Hopper's drawings are paired with incisive commentary by Robert Metzger. Describing the wizened foreign legionnaire in *Alone*, he writes: “Shouldering his rifle, he scans the desert panorama, casting a long shadow with the sun at his back. In front of his feet are a few spindly plants popping out of the sand, indicating the tenacity of life in harsh conditions.”

Peter Hutchinson, an internationally known conceptual artist and a colleague of Robert Smithson, was honored last winter with a major retrospective at the Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck, his most compressive exhibition in Germany to date. He resides in Provincetown, where the size of his garden dwarfs the nutshell of his small studio, where he makes his collages and constructions. The large part of his property is consecrated to a variety of gardens, pools, and elevations, where trees, flowers, bushes, and rock ledges are married to the concepts he creates in his studio. He has so absorbed the cycle of the seasons that he has learned the secret of how nature resurrects itself

each spring. In *Resuscitation*, he shows how he performed this magic on himself.

Anne Packard, the granddaughter of Max Bohm, whose painting *En Mer*, shown here, won the gold medal prize at the Paris Grand Salon in 1898, has taken the water's edge as her own motif. Bohm, one of the founders of the Provincetown art colony, painted the sea mostly in dark moods. Packard has found an idiom in which a single red dory is dwarfed by the expansive light that surrounds it. The two artists, separated by a generation, were brought together this spring in a stunning exhibition, "En Mer," at the Walker-Cunningham gallery in Boston.

Elisabeth Pearl, whose work was reviewed here in 2008, is showing new work this summer at Ernden Fine Art Gallery—her *Particle/Wave Series*, based on a technique that is very grainy because of her use of sand, gesso, white glue, and paint. Her impulse derives from the metaphor she perceives in particles of sand and particle physics, where waves and particles can simultaneously exist. Her process, which she calls "Pollyfresco," involves the creation of a thick mixture, "like pancake batter," which she spreads thickly on a wood panel. Several hours pass while she reads passages in *The Tao of Physics*, meditating on how she will use her spoons, forks, and knives to sculpt the symbolic forms that calm the mind; her circles, crusted on blue grounds, allow us to find satisfaction in our own wonder.

Paul Resika, who appeared on our cover in 2004, is exhibiting paintings from the *Monument Series*, which he produced between 1987 and 1992. The exhibition is planned to coincide with the celebration of this iconic symbol that so characterizes P'town's complications as its own city-state, like Siena in Dante's time, and its bell tower on which our monument is modeled. Perhaps the design was chosen because an Italian discovered America, and Resika, after living in Venice, and after studying with Hans Hofmann, grew to learn how Venetian light had its Provincetown equivalent. The image on our back cover is from this series.

Judith Shahn (1929–2009) was remembered last fall at the Fine Arts Work Center, where she and her husband, Alan Dugan, were part of a small group of founders, staff, and Fellows in the early days of the Center, when only the fiercest tenacity could ensure its endurance. Keith Althaus, a Fellow in poetry in 1969, the first year writers were accepted, observed, "Today's Work Center is successful because the early Center was successful, and that was because those involved were moved to make it so. Judy and Dugan gave of themselves in a way that I still think of as awe-inspiring. Who else would make the trip, not once, but twice and even three times in one day, in all conditions, from South Truro, to attend a meeting, and then an opening or a reading? They were indefatigable and their presence was inspirational."

WRITERS

Nick Flynn, who appeared with Tony Vevers on our cover in 2006, has written a new memoir, *The Ticking Is the Bomb* (Norton)—an urgent response to



MAX BOHM, *EN MER*
COURTESY OF WALKER-CUNNINGHAM FINE ART



ELISABETH PEARL, *COSMIC DANCE*



SEBASTIAN JUNGER



the explosive photographs of torture at Abu Ghraib. He was invited by the U.S. government to go there as part of a group of cultural figures in an effort to bring fresh eyes to methods of interrogation. What makes this book as good as his previous best seller, *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City*, is the combination of descriptions of torture, visits abroad as a witness, his stateside marriage to the actress Lili Taylor, and the birth of their daughter. The book is a collage of sharply drawn scenes, and Flynn extends in prose the technique he discovered in his first book of poems, *Some Ether*, where he collapsed into shared rhythms configurations of lines and images from scattered sources of emotional energy. The result is, again, a psychological achievement of the highest order. Here is the initial paragraph from the chapter "The Ticking Is the Bomb":

"Let's say you're a soldier in Iraq, assigned to a military prison. You are now the Military Police, an MP, though you have not been trained for this. You've been told to soften up the prisoners before you, to get them ready to be interrogated the next day. Military intelligence tells you this, though sometimes you are told it by CIA spooks, and sometimes by civilian contractors, whose names you don't know and who answer to no one. Give them a bad night, you've been told, so you give them a bad night—you strip them naked, you throw cold water on them, you do not let them sleep. The rules have changed, you've been told, the gloves have come off. One guy, whenever you knee him in the thigh, he cries *Allah*—it becomes a game to see how many times you can make him cry *Allah*."

Michael Hattersley published his third book last fall, *Socrates and Jesus: The Argument That Shaped Western Civilization* (Algora Publishing), an ambitious assessment of the mixed contributions stemming from Judeo-Christian religion and Greek rationality, as these traditions evolved over time from the historical Socrates and Jesus. Hattersley, who earned a PhD in literature at Yale, writes: "By Socrates' day, sophisticated circles treated the gods as metaphors, but more important was the Greek view of human-divine relations. The gods were not entirely *other* to the Greeks; certainly they possessed divine powers, but, especially as depicted by Homer, they loved, grew angry, squabbled, and deceived; in short, they experienced and identified with the whole range of human behaviors."

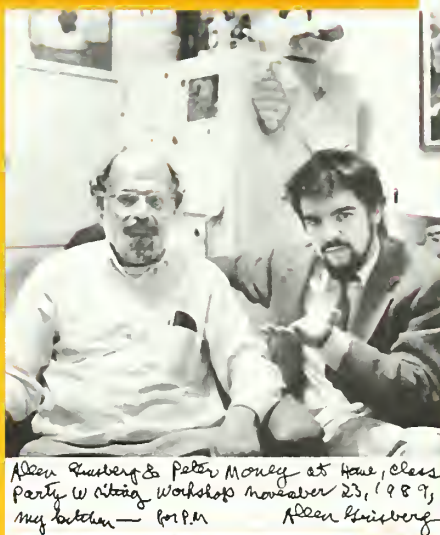
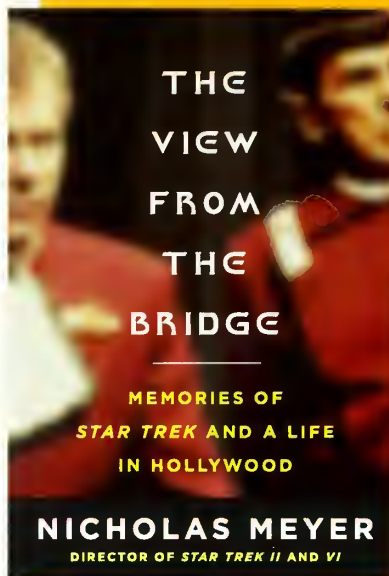
Sebastian Junger, who appeared on our cover in 2002, just as *The Perfect Storm* was hitting the best-seller list, has now published another gritty close-up of people in dangerous jobs, *War*, detailing the cycle of moods of a soldier in combat in the Korengal Valley in Afghanistan. As a reporter for *Vanity Fair*, Junger was embedded with the Second Platoon of Battle Company, whose mission was to secure a bleak outpost in the most hostile mountains. (The outpost was named Restrepo after Private Juan Restrepo, who had been killed there.) Junger returned four times over two years for a total of fifteen months with the troops. He has codirected (with Tim Hetherington) a movie, *Restrepo*, documenting what he actually experienced. Not depicted is the moment when his vehicle was

bombed, the explosion going off under the engine block, which served, fortunately, as his protective armor. When Junger returned for another reporting mission, he had earned the respect of the men. The helmeted soldier pictured on the cover of *War* is Brendan O'Byrne, who visited the Cape after he withdrew from the military. He told us: "We fought like animals, loved each other, took care of each other. When you must fight, you fight. When you enter civilian life, you don't have to do this anymore. Building the fort took months, mostly using flimsy pickaxes to chip away, and packing the rubble in bags, which we stacked. We moved twenty-five tons of dirt, bag by bag. Now the outpost is abandoned. This platoon, the men who did what we did, will be the epitome of what I will look to for the rest of my life. I went through the experience, but I could not put down my feelings as well as Sebastian has. Reading his book helped me with my PTSD."

Nicholas Meyer's new memoir, *The View from the Bridge: Memories of Star Trek and a Life in Hollywood* (Viking Press), was written during the strike of the Writers Guild. He had summered in his family's house in the East End since his childhood, but he had made a career in Hollywood after publishing his best-selling novel, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*, about Sigmund Freud's cocaine addiction and Sherlock Holmes's education in inspired detective work. Meyer's screenplay was the topic of Jill Kearney's profile in *Provincetown Arts* 2003. His first film, *Around the World in 80 Days*, was made in Provincetown with his father, Bernard Meyer, a psychiatrist who had written a book about Joseph Conrad. It was set in New York and on Cape Cod. (Nicholas was Phileas Fogg.) His memoir recounts his evolution from a novelist to a screenwriter to a director. His proudest accomplishment is that his film *The Day After* changed Ronald Reagan's mind about a winnable nuclear war.

Peter Money is a poet and editor of Harbor Mountain Press in Vermont. His new book, *Che* (www.blazevox.org), is a hybrid of poetry, fiction, and cultural commentary. Some of the moments offer startling insight into how language itself can expose fresh thoughts. Money studied with Allen Ginsberg at Brooklyn College, and has fashioned a voice that ranges wildly, like water splashing over rocks. Ginsberg once said, "My interest is in sacred moments of character." Money writes, "Identifying the dead is no easy task. Their faces, bound like books, turned contents inward, radish colored yams, a character losing sight of its own word. Punish the ones who did this, the chapters—poof!—without dignity! Rather, let it be blue. Let even a song not contain it but push out, and out, into grooves the self meets in ensemble. We well and we wake, wake and well, rail and wail, wail and rail, whatever makes us and makes us well."

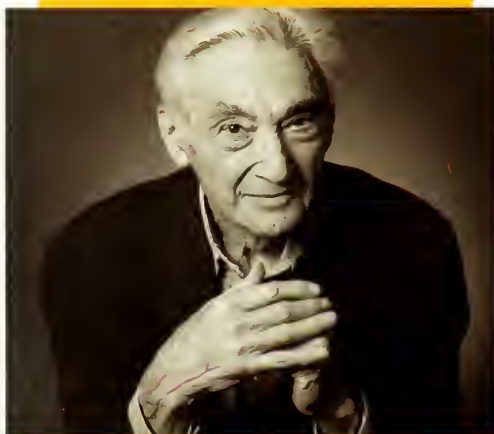
Dwayne Raymond, Norman Mailer's personal assistant during the last four years of his life, has published a book offering fascinating details about the great author's daily routines, *Mornings with Mailer: A Recollection of Friendship* (HarperCollins). He was hired to do typing, copying, and research—"Find out everything you can about how to grow



ALLEN GINSBERG AND PETER MOONEY



DWAYNE RAYMOND AND NORMAN MAILER



HOWARD ZINN

a potato," Mailer asked when he was working on the chapter in *The Castle in the Forest* where a farmer decides to plant a crop of potatoes. Then, because he was a talented cook who had worked in a local restaurant, he began to cook a few nights a week. Norman became frailer, very slowly. Raymond began to pick up his prescriptions, deal with his doctors, and shop for his supplies, going from a researcher to a full-time assistant. When Mailer's secretary in New York, Judith McNally, died, Raymond took on more of her roles, including putting Norman's words into a computer. He said, "With the evolution of the job was an evolution of affection. I was the first one who got his drafts; he'd hand it to me and say give it a read. I'd fax it to Judith, it would come back, and he'd spend twenty minutes editing it, and hand it to me to feed back into the fax machine. I would have time to read it, and see how he cut out the superfluous. I'd notice his pattern of editing. In the attic when he was working, I could hear him whispering what he was writing, sotto voce, and tapping his desk to the rhythm and force of the words. Working in the service industry, you learn boundaries because, for example, serving food is an intimate encounter. I am a generally quiet person, and Norman liked the comfort of another sentient being."

Howard Zinn's third play, *Daughter of Venus*, staged early this summer at the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater, was a tribute from the theater's cofounder, Jeff Zinn, to the ability of his father to move audiences. Howard Zinn's revisionist view of American received opinion, *A People's History of the United States*, sold over two million copies and changed the thinking of a generation of college students. In the book, he describes how he became an enemy of war after bombing a little French village where a few German soldiers lingered after the war was winding down. His B-17 dropped napalm, burning the houses and its people, but Zinn was high in the air and did not witness the consequence of his actions; he was a soldier doing his duty, hardly thinking of the others as human beings. He was in Italy with his bride, Roslyn, when he saw a newspaper headline about the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and, at that time, he felt that was a necessary thing. During his career as a writer and activist, his personal charisma won over student after student. When he taught at Spelman College, a liberal arts women's college in Atlanta, his pupil was the passionate author Alice Walker, who credits Zinn's own passion for ordinary individuals whose natural impulses show us the way to live in a world without war. Zinn insists we consider that our own holy war, the Revolutionary War that achieved our independence from England, may not have been necessary. He wants us to reflect on the fact that Canada achieved independence from England without war. Zinn's warm visage and wise eyes make us think about the complexity of human relations. The military theorist Carl von Clausewitz wrote in *On War*, "War is a continuation of politics by other means." Howard Zinn taught us that politics may be the continuation of war by other means.

Letter from the Managing Editor

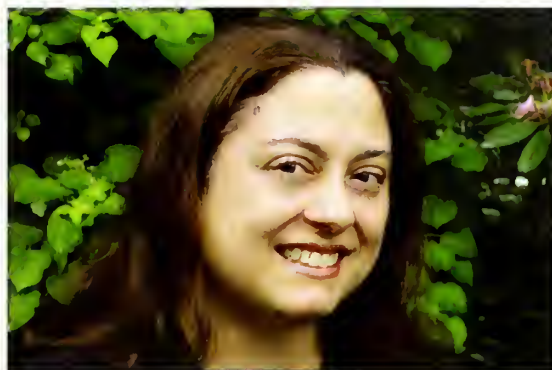
As I sat down to write this letter, I found myself truly at a loss for words. Of course, after five years at *Provincetown Arts*, I have a great deal to say about the magazine: What a privilege it is to work with the staff, the writers. What an honor it is to see the magazine grow and unfold each year, shining a steady light on the arts. But how could I describe the twenty-five year journey that brought us here? The simple truth was, I couldn't. And so I turned to the founders of the magazine, Chris Busa and Ray Elman, to gain some perspective on the journey.

It all began in 1985. Ray, who was on the board of directors at PAAM and president of the Group Gallery, had begun to feel that the local media were not showing the importance of Provincetown as a historic art colony. Chris, who had been a graduate student in English for a decade, had just returned to Provincetown after spending a year in New York, working in a bookstore that specialized in books on military history and writing articles for several magazines. When Ray mentioned the idea of an arts magazine to Chris, it was kismet. *Provincetown Arts* was born.

The first few years were filled with trial and error and change, from a tabloid format to the current format, from three issues a year to the current annual. Aside from the time Chris spent creating catalogs for the Military Bookman, they had no magazine publishing experience. As Ray puts it, they "didn't know a pica from Pike's Peak." And as they worked late at night in the borrowed *Cape Codder* offices in Orleans, everyone pitched in. Tony Kahn, a friend who worked at the *Cape Codder*, helped them to paste up the layout in a newspaper format. Chris tried his hand at designing. They would read out loud to each other to proof the text. And yet, the work must have had its lighter moments, as Ray remembers it as "a lark," and Chris calls it a "magical time."

And even though the staff was new in publishing, they had the highest quality content from the very first issue, attracting Pulitzer Prize-winning writers such as Stanley Kunitz, writing about his friend, the painter Jack Tworikov (the text is reproduced in this issue). Award-winning photographer Joel Meyerowitz shot the covers for the first nine years, featuring artists such as Fritz Bultman, Norman Mailer, and Robert Motherwell. Chris and Ray had succeeded in creating the magazine they envisioned, one that gave a new depth of discussion to the history and work of their community. And now that there was a venue celebrating Provincetown artists, people wanted to communicate seriously about art.

Twenty-five years later, we see that serious, and joyful, conversation continuing.



When Chris had originally envisioned the magazine, he told Stanley Kunitz he wanted to create a magazine about poetry. Kunitz replied, "Why have the magazine be about poetry? Why not have it *be* poetry?" We see this legacy in the breadth of the content, which highlights all of the arts, from painting to writing to theater to architecture to music. Visual arts and written language have common communication in these pages.

And there is no better example of this synthesis of images and words than in the work of our featured artist Mira Schor—a visual artist and writer who has found a way to make both mediums sing, separately and together, in a powerful harmony. Our second featured artist, the writer Anne Bernays, celebrates the styling of words into stories, the great "what if?" that inspires all artists in every medium to move forward in generating form. A noted teacher of writing and an award-winning novelist, she explores not only the creative process, but the magical alchemy of language itself.

Our contemporary staff is no less dedicated than the original one. Irene Lipton, our Art Director, has been given a palette worthy of her talents this year in our first full-color issue. Ingrid Aue, our Marketing Director, finds a way to not only increase our subscriptions, but lift our spirits with her unfailing support. And our maestro, Chris Busa, continues to lead us into a new era of conversations and poetry.

The founders' mission as stated in the masthead, to demonstrate that "a community of artists, functioning outside the urban centers, is a utopian dream with an ongoing vitality," has been fulfilled. For Chris and Ray, the magazine was an opportunity for their community to put its "best foot forward." To honor the roots of a historic artists' colony and equally show its place in contemporary, cutting-edge art. To share a chapter in American cultural history through the stories of art and artists in a small community by the sea.

When Chris showed his father, painter Peter Busa, the first issue of *Provincetown Arts*, and the article he wrote on the sculptor Paul Bowen, the father told the son, "It shines." Twenty-five years later, it's still shining, and brighter than ever.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Susanna".

Susanna Ralli
Managing Editor



RAY ELMAN AND CHRIS BUSA HOLDING THE FIRST ISSUE OF *PROVINCETOWN ARTS* IN 1985.



Close Listening

MIRA SCHOR AND CHARLES BERNSTEIN august 23, 2009

IN PROVINCETOWN LAST SUMMER, poet Charles Bernstein interviewed Mira Schor for his Art International Radio program, *Close Listening*. In the first of two half-hour programs, Schor read brief excerpts from several of her essays: "Figure/Ground" from *Wet*, and "Email to a Young Woman Artist," "Recipe Art," and "Modest Painting" from *A Decade of Negative Thinking*. The original programs can be accessed at ARTonAIR.org and at PennSound (writing.upenn.edu/pennsound).

CHARLES BERNSTEIN: You started with a reading from your essay "Figure/Ground" from *Wet* and you brought up again this image of wet. You mentioned Duchamp as a counterexample, but I don't think Duchamp is really the dry artist that is your target there. Could you revisit that for a second, coming back twenty years later?

MIRA SCHOR: I'm not sure that Duchamp requires defending. His turn away from painting towards the readymade and other conceptual interventions is considered one of the major breaks in the dominance of painting. In "Figure/Ground," I cite Duchamp's call for "a completely *dry* drawing, a *dry* conception of art" in the context of my analysis of certain critics' seemingly deep disgust with the wetness of painting.

How does that work for you as a metaphor for describing kinds of art, wet/dry?

Wet versus dry. I wouldn't say that I had decided to choose that binary. I felt that the binary was chosen for me by a certain area of art criticism and art history that was valorizing things like photography and collage and video and film, and definitely critiquing painting. My interest was in analyzing and kind of *psycho*-analyzing the reasons for what seemed like a disgust for pigmentation and for a certain kind of lubricity of paint.

Also just the visceralness of the artwork.

Well, that's it, although I think that some paintings would be described as visceral, and others might not be. But it seemed like there was a blanket lack of interest in painting that was being put forward with a claim for objectivity. I was interested in analyzing the critics' language and also analyzing some of the references that they made to see whether there were some other deeper reasons why they were in a sense disgusted by the wetness of painting.

Do you think that binary is as powerful in our thinking about art or the reception of art or perhaps the control of the art market now as it was twenty years ago?

I think in some ways the conditions are quite similar, because at this point you have a situation which is not unlike the one in the eighties where you had an art market that certainly was very interested in great big paintings. You had Neo-Geo. You had the Neo-Expressionists. And at the same time, you had a lot of political work, a lot of photo-based work, a lot of photo-collage work. Now there's an emphasis on the digital as well as on video installation. There's still a lot of painting going on, often with similar features to Neo-Geo or Neo-Abstraction. In fact, they're just new incarnations of the same.

In some of the later essays in your new book, including "Recipe Art," which you read, you speak about conceptual art as being recipe art, market driven. So this is a kind of morphing of conceptual art, because conceptual itself, going back to Duchamp—in many ways Duchamp would be as intensely against recipes as you, against the reduction of his work to this axiomatic level. In fact, Duchamp is entirely anti-axiomatic. So I'm interested in the persistence of the axiomatic, what you call the terrorism of art criticism, and your experience since the time of writing that and then in terms of the new book.

As you say, Duchamp's work may well be anti-axiomatic—I'm not sure I agree with you; doesn't French philosophy love axioms?—but I certainly feel that there has been an axiomatic aspect to the way he is used in the ongoing critique of painting. I think the biggest difference is that at the time that I wrote "Figure/Ground" there was a critical oligarchy. I used to call it "the cartel." This included *October* magazine, which was then connected to an international curatorial network with great sway at high levels of the art world.

I recently wrote a piece in *Parkett* talking about this, extending what you say in that first essay. And a young person associated with *October* wrote a response that said, in effect, "This dominance of

the axiomatic, this critical oligarchy, to use your term, doesn't exist anymore, nobody subscribes to that. Anybody who says that shouldn't be listened to. We'll have no part of them! We must exclude them! They are ignorant!" So exactly exemplifying the continuation by the denial, which I think was quite funny.

Exactly. Whereas, in fact, they are incredibly well-trained clones of the original. It's like the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*—they are clones.

"We are not clones. We are independent thinkers." [*Here and just below, Charles is speaking in the voice of a robot, or a person brainwashed by aliens in a 1950s sci-fi movie, saying whatever they had been programmed to say.*]

Exactly. They still hate painting, I think, and feminism.

"We love painting, but just not painting that exists in the real world."

And I think that many other young people would say, "Who reads *October*?" That institution may have lost a certain amount of power. Right now there's a different oligarchy, which is purely the market and a media-oriented obsession with branding and with the kind of quick fame that has replaced serious critical attention. I occasionally find myself favorably remembering the dialogue—unfortunately a one-way dialogue between me and *October*—because at least there were discussions of ideas and things that I cared about, even though they were on the opposite side. Now although it looks like we're in an anything goes atmosphere, there are still a lot of clues as to what makes something look contemporary as I try to describe in "Recipe Art."

Both your book and your newer essays explore, in George Lakoff's sense, that the metaphors we live by are the metaphors that art sells by. It isn't you that invented these binaries—they go very far back. But they are deployed in particular ways by the art market, often insidiously and often contrary to their philosophical and aesthetic roots. Another tack of yours is exemplified by the piece you read at the end, "Modest Painting." It goes against the painting that was most acclaimed in our youth, pitting heroic painting (such as much Abstract Expressionism) against modest. There's a binary within the realm of painting—modest versus heroic.

Abstract Expressionism is very much at the root of that essay. I talk about how, as I slow down to look for modest painting, I find myself going back to autobiographical roots. The roots are my experience as a young person within the world of the New York School and Abstract Expressionism—particularly my family's friendship with Jack Tworkov and my growing awareness, once I began to study the production of the Abstract Expressionist canon, of his place in it. People were asking me, "What is modest painting? Is this a modest painting?" So I compare Myron Stout's work to Tworkov's in relation to the notion of modest. I also look at the work of my father, Ilya Schor, which in a way stands outside of the history of modernism, and





LISPENARD STREET LOFT, 1986 PHOTO SARAH WELLS

which exemplifies a modest approach to painting and the world, inspired by memories of Hasidic life in the shtetl. I look also at some contemporary paintings that may appear modest because they are small and even carelessly produced. Some are more about abjection or a kind of fake or spectacular modesty. I don't know if that answers your question.

"Innovative" and "ambitious" are two words usually contrasted with the modest. But you give a positive valence to the term "modest," which tends to be negatively valued. You make this argument in your introductory essay to *The Extreme of the Middle: Writings of Jack Tworokov*, which you edited. Still, you maintain interest in eccentricity, which would not be in the middle and could be understood as extreme.

"Modesty" strikes me as a very gendered term—women are modest, men are heroic. The heroic, the conceptually grand, the ambitious, is often attributed to male artists. Modesty has a long history in terms of needlework, in terms of folk art, in terms of a more collective approach rather than individuality. You've constantly gone after gender discrimination, to put the word "misogyny" in a more modest way.

Women now have access to do enormous works themselves. The Pipilotti Rist multimedia installation in the atrium at MoMA in 2008–9 would be an example, since it is operating within the rules of the Society of the Spectacle. But she is also someone who has done very modest and powerful interventions into space, such as her little video, *Selfless in the Bath of Lava*, inserted in a small crack in the floor at P.S.1. I apply the idea of the modest to take a feminist approach to the study of a male artist, like Tworokov, who would seem to have been part of the male ambition, yet had an ascetic, sensual poeticism. His ambition was more for the art than for himself. Within the frame of Abstract Expressionism, you have de Kooning, Kline and Pollock, Barnett Newman and Reinhardt, who are not modest in the scale of their work or the boldness of their gesture. Other figures in that group, who were men, seem feminized in that context.

In the context of poetry, modesty and discretion would be related to issues of exhibitionism or sexual display. Immodesty was a possibility

for men that wasn't as easily open to women as it is now. Now, immodesty is commonly a trope for women.

Yes, women are falling into the same trap, the same mechanism.

I'm not saying "trap," I'm saying "trope."

No, I know. You end up with two categories that are not gender related. What I am positing is that you can do work that is extremely rigorous and ambitious for the medium or the genre that you're working in. On any one side you'll have both men and women working without gender restrictions or constraints.

As you know I have been interested in your use of verbal language in your work. You use plenty of words. Don't they mess up a painting? Shouldn't the painting be without words? Aren't words for writers and non-word stuff for painters?

So they say! Of course, I feel I've succeeded in what I consider is necessary to make a painting of language interesting, which is that it has to be interesting whether or not you can read the words. In the seventies, I started to work with language as image in my work, wanting to get across the idea that women were filled with language. I was less interested in presenting legible text. In works like my *Book of Pages* (1976) and my masks from 1977, I began to use my own handwriting as an image. I realized it was beautiful as a graphic image. As you know, I wrote a statement for the "Poetry Plastique" show you curated with Jay Sanders a few years back, which began with the words, "I paint in English." At the moment, English may be a kind of lingua franca, but many viewers may not speak or read English. So that eliminates certain levels of understanding of some people looking at the work. But I would hope that you would get the idea of language. And if you also can read the content, that's good.

My goal, especially when I've worked in oil, is to make it so that you can't really separate the language of painting from the text being represented, rather like the balance of figure/ground, so you would see the letter and the surface, the letter and the word, and how it was painted. You'd have to think of both at the same time. I did those large Scrabble pieces, like cross-word puzzles, where each canvas represented one letter of my handwriting blown up so there was a semi-legible but also purely abstract form. Let's say the word was *chiaroscuro*. I would find that people would look at the entire installation of fifty canvases and they would first read it one letter, one painting at a time and not understand that they were looking at a word and a series of interconnected words. Then they would understand that they were looking at a word and that word actually was related to how that painting was painted. A kind of synaesthesia was very important to me in those works; the word told me whether the painting was going to be thick or thin, dry or oily, very painterly or very flat. It told me in an intuitive manner to some extent, unless it was *blue*, and then the painting might actually be blue, you know, or the letters would be blue.

I've been an artist for almost forty years and my primary image has been language or written language for at least half of those years, on and off. The rest of the time I've worked with representation of the body or with landscape. Forms from those landscapes, like the landscape of Provincetown, have entered the work. The way I create a letter *t* and the way I depict a bird or sand flat or a cactus frond are very similar. So if you see the paintings with writing, you wouldn't necessarily know that I also have at times been very immersed in landscape or in figuration; yet these underlying connections are embedded, each aspect of my work is a subtext for another. I'm working on archiving my work to emphasize the generative interrelation between my artworks, some of which represent text, and my critical writing.

People sometimes say that you can't look at a word as an image and read it at the same time. Either you look at it or you read it. Overlaying the linguistic and the visual, you may create a conflict or possibly a synthesis, an overlay, a syncretism. Right now we're not writing, we're speaking, and perhaps that doesn't have a visual dimension. But writing always has a visual dimension and that's a crucial to what writing is. But, Mira, do you feel that art criticism interferes with your purity as an artist?

I'm fortunate to be able to use both sides of my brain. I don't consider myself an art critic. I'm an art writer.

You're an essayist.



SIGN, 2005, OIL ON LINEN, 12 BY 16 INCHES

If something interests me, I pursue it through research, looking for proof. I don't always find it, but I document the search. My writing is a continuation of my teaching and what goes on inside my mind. But I agree with you that there are many people who feel that one can't or shouldn't be both a painter and an art writer. They try to get me to choose. So, "You're really a writer, right?" Or, "You're really a painter, right?" A kind of "Sophie's Choice" because they find it very threatening that someone can do both at an equal level.

This is also true in poetry: you should either be a poet or you should be a critic or scholar. Otherwise questions are raised about whether the criticism, the ideas control the painting.



SEXUAL PLEASURE, 1998, OIL, INK, AND GESSO ON LINEN, INSTALLATION VARIABLE, EACH CANVAS 12 BY 16 INCHES

That's always been the rap against artists who write, like Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, or Robert Motherwell.

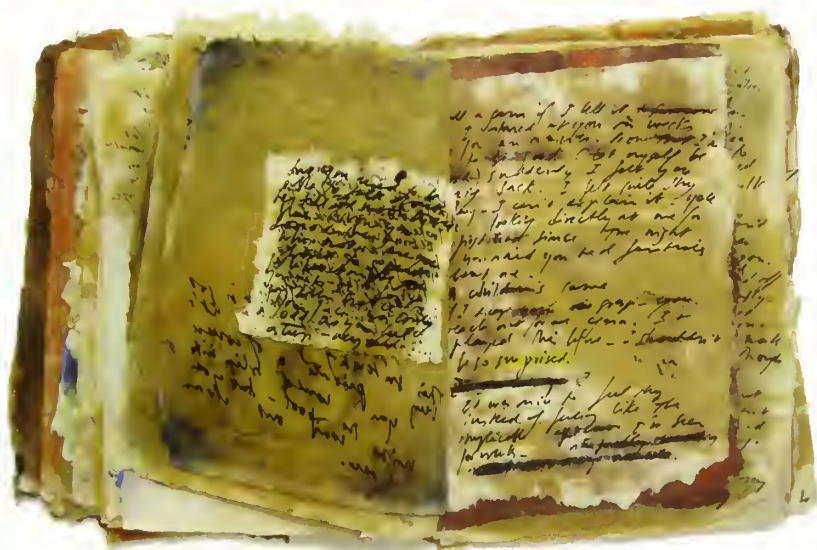
I like the genre of artists' writing, which tends to be very different than the writing of people who are not directly involved in making art. Not that it's better. But different issues are raised. Different binaries may come up! Possibly a new range of principles come from the practitioner's point of view.

Artists such as Robert Smithson and Allan Kaprow, as well as Tworokov, Newman, and Reinhardt—their writings are another art form. They contribute something valuable that is independent of their visual work.

At the same time, it really can't be differentiated from their art practice in many ways.

That's my point exactly and that's how I feel about what I do. It is all of a piece, a total work.

That again brings Duchamp to mind. That's why I'd contrast the conceptual, as an art practice of a mode of poetic thinking, with the axiomatic, what you call a kind of terrorized regime of positivist approach. In this sense, conceptual writing and poetics, and the larger field of



BOOK OF PAGES, 1976, MIXED MEDIA ON RICE PAPER, C 12 BY 20 BY 1 INCHES

artists' writing, can be the strongest critique of regimented uniform thinking in favor of multiformity and eccentricity.

Yes, except that now conceptual is often just one more trope that is marketable and is being perverted by the idea that in fact you really still have to make a market object. You can't have a purely conceptual artwork; any image must be consumable and circulated as a commodity.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN: You've been listening to a sound recording that you can play and replay of Mira Schor on *Close Listening*, available for noncommercial distribution only, and which has virtually no commercial value. The program was recorded on August 23, 2009, on location at the outermost point of Cape Cod in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and is a production of PennSound, in collaboration with Art International Radio operating at ARTonAIR.org. For more information on this show, visit our Web site: writing.upenn.edu/pennsound. This is Charles Bernstein, close listening to the inaudible songs in the sonic sea.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN is author of *All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010). He is Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. For more information, go to: epc.buffalo.edu.

A Mind in a Body in a Landscape

THE ART AND LIFE OF MIRA SCHOR

BY NAOMI FRY



SEVERAL YEARS AGO, the Fine Arts Department at Parsons The New School for Design invited faculty and students to begin the school year with a small introductory self-portrait. Mira Schor, who has been teaching at the school since the late 1980s, used her contribution to this project to make sure her students understood, as she later wryly told me, that they were “not the only thing on my plate.” Schor’s multiple preoccupations and responsibilities are depicted as cartoon thought balloons, so crowded they seem near popping as they hover over her faintly smiling, bespectacled face. Prosaic drudgeries (“laundry”) are presented alongside familial responsibilities (“94 year old mother”), more lighthearted leisure pursuits (“food”; “Mets”), professorial duties (“Parsons MFA”), and intellectual obligations (“other lectures etc....”), suggesting in toto that a woman’s work really *is* never done.

Schor's depiction is clearly anti-spectacular in its stress on the workaday quality of an artist's existence, and palpably democratic. The balloons, both in size and placement, seem at first glance interchangeable, and their arrangement nonhierarchical. This may owe a debt to Schor's longtime refusal, as a feminist critical thinker, to privilege the so-called central over the marginal. Moreover, in this self-portrait Schor introduces us to the extraordinary scope of her work, as a painter, writer, editor, and educator. As she told me when we first met, she finds this self-portrait so much more representative than many more conventional photos that she has ended up using it as her public avatar, most recently on Facebook.

An attractive woman whose vividly framed reading glasses are perennially perched atop her short, spiky hairdo, Schor can appear by turns tart and warm, anxious and assured, reflecting the complex combination of self-effacement and directness, irony and honesty that characterizes her work. As we spoke over tea and cookies in her downtown loft, moving between what I sensed were the space's two symbolic hearths—the open kitchen, adorned with colorful Mexican ceramics, and Schor's large desktop Mac—the scope of her career and the unique position she has held in the art world began coming into sharper focus. Schor, I learned, not only is both a painter and a writer—a hybrid stance that, as she's written, often makes people suspicious (“what *is* she, really?”)—but has also often taken up a role that most aren't in any hurry to fill: that of the person who speaks truth to power. This, I found, has been for Schor an almost unavoidable ethical reaction. Over the course of her career, she hasn't shied away from expressing her deeply felt political convictions, has openly criticized those who she felt abuse their positions of authority or influence, and has consistently worked to subvert the sort of self-congratulatory, cautious-to-a-fault stances that often characterize the contemporary art world.

But despite the art world adversaries that the bold expression of her opinions has earned her, it should be emphasized that Schor is no silenced, marginal figure. As an editor, she was for many years, along with the painter Susan Bee, the cofounder and coeditor of the highly respected art critical journal *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*. As a writer, she is the author of two collections of essays, both published by Duke University Press—the first, *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture*, has been in print ever since its initial publication in 1997, and is consistently assigned to painting and criticism syllabi across the country, while the second, *A Decade of Negative Thinking: Essays on Art, Politics, and Daily Life*, published in 2009, has already been receiving laudatory reviews. She is also the editor of two volumes, most recently *The Extreme of the Middle: Writings of Jack Tworok*, published by Yale University Press. She is a recipient of the College Art Association's Frank Jewett Mather Award in art criticism and, just this past year, a Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. As a painter, despite her chronic overextendedness, she has consistently produced an inventive and accomplished body of work, for which she has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, and which has been shown, among many other venues, at P.S.1 Museum, the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Connecticut, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and most recently in a well-received show at Moma gallery in Brooklyn. This spring saw the launch of her blog about art and culture, “A Year of Positive Thinking,” (ayearofpositivethinking.com), and in fall 2010, she will have her first solo show in Los Angeles at CB1 Gallery.

This is an especially good moment, then, to take stock of Schor's work—to reaffirm the recognition she has received, and to puzzle out whatever misconceptions it has inspired. This puzzling out, however, should hopefully serve to *clarify* the dilemmas that animate Schor's oeuvre, rather than erase them: this because Schor's interest in and insistence upon retaining a tension between positions that could seem (and *have* seemed, for many other artists and thinkers) to reside on opposite sides of various spectra, has played a broad generative role in her body of work. By challenging—if not necessarily completely collapsing—the binaries between the



SHOE, MARCH 5, 1972, GOUACHE ON PAPER, c. 7.25 BY 9 INCHES

essential and the constructed, the corporeal and the intellectual, the familial and the personal, craft and art, the native and the foreign, the painterly and the political, Schor has created a deeply original dialect, which, whatever its variable manifestations over the course of her career, has always retained the distinctive beauty of that which rejects comfortable resolution.



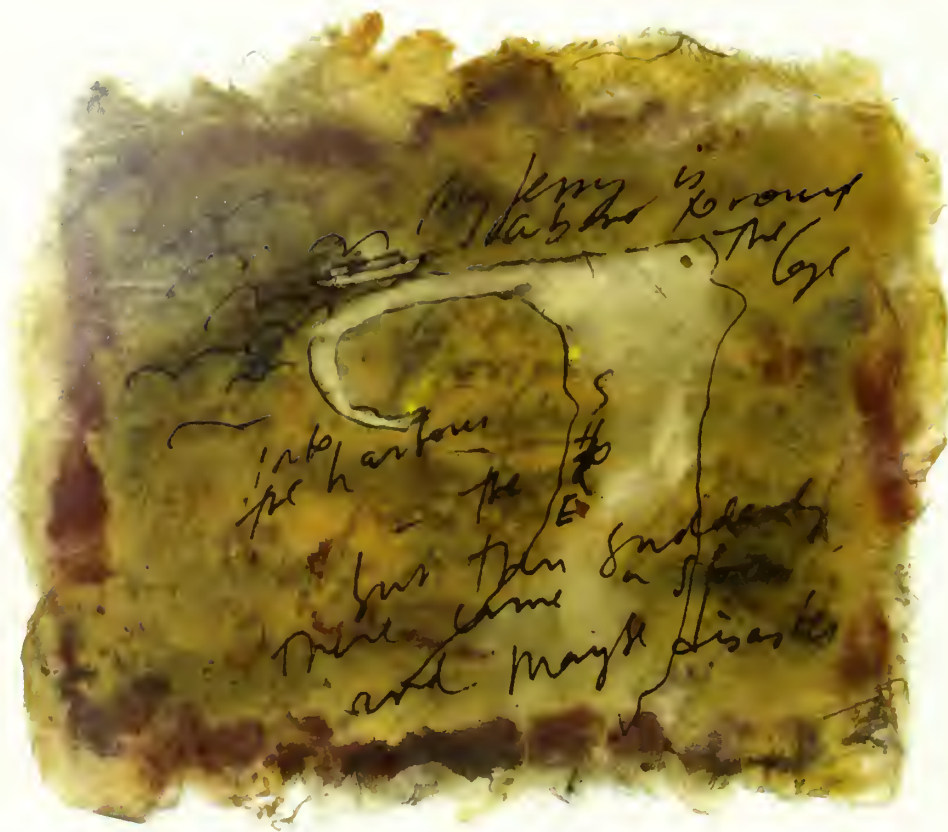
The recipe could read as follows: mix Hasidic Eastern European Ancestors, European artist parents, a French education, New York School of Painting family friends, add a splash of H. W. Janson, stir in a shot of Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, a cup of conceptual art, simmer, and before serving, pepper with critical theory.

— from the Introduction of *Wet*

SCHOR WAS BORN in 1950 to Resia and Ilya Schor, Jewish-Polish artists who in 1941 fled from Hitler's Europe to the United States. Although both Schor and her older sister, Naomi, were born in America, the household they grew up in retained a multilingual, cosmopolitan air, influenced not only by the family's immersion and interest in Western European culture



THE TWO MIRAS, 1973, GOUACHE ON PAPER, 22 BY 30 INCHES



POSTCARD, 1976, INK, DRY PIGMENT AND MEDIA ON RICE PAPER, C. 5.5 BY 6.5 INCHES

(Resia and Ilya had lived in Paris before arriving in New York; Naomi and Mira were both educated at Manhattan's Lycée Français), but also by its strong Eastern European roots. Ilya Schor was a painter and sculptor, but, most recognizably, a jeweler and Judaica artist, and his delicate, gorgeous pieces, made mostly in silver and gold, represented the humble lifestyle and manner of the shtetl both literally and figuratively. Literally, by having his work feature everyday Hasidic village existence and interactions; figuratively, in the choice of medium and genre: representational, small-scale craft rather than abstract, large-scale Art. His artist's stamp—a small, lightly sketched bird—signaled this essential modesty.

Resia Schor was also an artist—a painter; but after Ilya's death in 1961, in order to keep the family afloat financially, she picked up the tools of his trade and found in his materials the medium that truly challenged and engaged her talents. In contrast to her husband's work, Resia's jewelry and Judaica pieces were bolder and heavier, more abstract and muscular, suggesting not only the disparity of styles available within the language of a supposedly minor art form, but also what Schor herself has identified as a curious gender reversal among her parents' aesthetic sensibilities.

Family history is arguably significant to look at vis-à-vis any artist's work, but in Schor's case, it's crucial. To gain an initial understanding of this artist's own aesthetic sensibility, one might find much of its beginnings in the early breeding ground described above. The parents' work laid the foundation for the daughter's own work's negotiation between ambition and modesty, small scale and monumentality, and, of course, its engagement with a feminist model, as well its belief in the importance of a daily art practice as a redeeming force. Ilya Schor's nimble dance between craftsmanship and art, and his insistence that material labor need not be divorced from attention to the human element; Resia Schor's quietly heroic plight as a woman who by necessity was able to alchemically turn art into work, transforming the tragedy of widowhood into a fiercely independent and engaged art practice; and, perhaps most of all, simply the lesson that art and life are not mutually exclusive but can exist and even flourish, side by side, in a cramped, residential Upper West Side apartment, in circumstances that pose a corrective to artistic grandiosity—all of these shaped Schor's outlook as an artist in critical ways.

A case in point is Schor's "shoe" series—painted in 1972, in her first year as an MFA candidate at CalArts. Shocking pink or red or lavender, bow-tied or dotted, open-toed or pointy, the ladies' shoes in Schor's gouache on paper paintings initially seem to arrive from the minor sphere of the fashion sketch, not unlike Warhol's commercial illustrations of the 1950s. Indeed, this practical starting point is never completely rejected. These accoutrements

of femininity are treated lovingly and with attention not despite but because of their supposedly marginal design associations. Cut off at the ankle, the feet Schor paints stand handsomely, as busts on pedestals—the stepped-on now stepping up—and the vibrant flatness of the artist's gouache renders them festive, while also according them a certain bold-lined gravitas.

But though the influence of Schor's early environment is clear here (indeed, we can almost literally see the trace of Ilya Schor's hand, as the daughter's signature is accompanied in this early series by her late father's bird emblem), this is not the only context through which we should view even these very early works. Rather, the strand that begins to emerge here, and that will go on to make an appearance in one form or another throughout Schor's entire oeuvre, is her desire, as she wrote in *Wet*, "to bring my experience of living inside a female body—with a mind—into high art in as intact a form as possible." This feminist agenda was influenced by the general 1970s zeitgeist of second-wave American feminism and, more specifically, by the influence of her sister, Naomi Schor, a brilliant scholar and feminist theorist, and by her formative year at the Feminist Art Program at CalArts, helmed by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in art history at New York University, Schor decided to pursue her art practice more fully at CalArts. With the encouragement of Naomi Schor's close friend Sheila Levrant de Brette-

ville, who was then creating a feminist design program at CalArts, she joined Chicago's and Schapiro's Feminist Art Program, which stressed the exploration of embodied female experience, consciousness-raising in a communal context, and the rethinking of traditional educational authority structures. Schor took part in the germinal 1972 *Womanhouse* exhibition, in which the members of the feminist program took over a dilapidated house in Hollywood, where they organized an installation and performance-heavy show of their work (Schor was one of the very few painters to contribute to the project—as she explained in *Negative Thinking*, feminist art making has tended to disregard most painting, as it "had a degree of inherent abstraction that made it less useful than the real in the elaboration of a political thematic"). She then remained in the program for the duration of her first year at CalArts. During that period, she began investigating in earnest what it means to be a woman making art—both personally and politically.

At CalArts in 1972–73, Schor worked on what she called "Story Paintings"—figurative small-scale works done in gouache on paper—which depicted intimate, colorful, and often dream-like narratives in which she herself served as the protagonist. Combining the flatness of early Renaissance paintings, the haunting quality of Surrealist aesthetics, and the vividness of Rajput miniatures, Schor represented stages in her sexual, psychological, and artistic development as a way to observe female subjectivity, both concretely and symbolically. In *The Two Miras* (1973), the artist is pictured twice—once with her back turned to the spectator, and once, bare-breasted, facing front. Framed by engorged desert plants, reminiscent of the California sandy landscape as much as of *Little Shop of Horrors*-like flora, the doubled Schor is herself an ambiguous figure: both retiring and blunt, a body and an idea, a material and a metaphor, an external "front" and a concealed "back," not one of which is necessarily privileged over the other.

These early works can be seen as mounting a feminist critique of patriarchal power, in terms of both content and form. The embodied feminine is thrust unapologetically to the forefront, and, what's more, this is done in a method and format that quietly but pointedly negate the forcefully male-sanctioned AbEx technique of oil on large-scale canvas. Additionally, the insertion of a woman's own personal story into public discourse—deeming it worth representing by the woman herself, as both author and model—is an approach that was not just advanced generally in early 1970s feminist politics, but also lay more specifically at the core of the feminist program itself.

The fact that Schor had created most of these feminist paintings after she had left Schapiro and Chicago's program speaks not only to her enduring belief in its ideals, but also to her ultimate independence from its more

constricting aspects. Significantly, despite her (then burgeoning, now long-standing) commitment to feminist thought and praxis, Schor's eventual resistance to fall in completely with the ethos of this program is another essential point to consider when assessing her trajectory as artist and thinker. Schor decided to leave the program at the end of her first year at CalArts, feeling that the negative effects of its insular stance as well as the aggressive personality clashes within it were outweighing the considerable benefits it offered. In a 1972 letter to her sister, Naomi, which she excerpts in her essay "Miss Elizabeth Bennet Goes to Feminist Boot Camp," Schor describes a tense encounter with Chicago:

I told her that I was allergic to her and she told me that she felt pretty much the same way about me. . . . She believes that she has had the single vision of a liberated woman artist and we must trust her with our lives for the next few months and she will lead us to the Promised Land. I told her that I thought she was using [us] as tools to create her vision and was very upset when we tried anything on our own. She didn't like that too much.

Besides the almost comical directness of the student in this exchange with her teacher—a frankness that will come to characterize Schor's writing later on—what is important to note here is her insistence on her right to occupy an ambivalent, multifaceted stance as an artist as well as a woman. She is, indeed, "two Miras," if not three or four or five, refusing to consent to any "molding," as she calls it in the same letter, through "violent methods." Indeed, this contention that there is not one but multiple ways to attain the "promised land"—that is, that a woman's subjectivity is a complex, variable thing—may itself stand at the core of feminism's demand for a recognition of that very subjectivity.

In 1974, back in New York, Schor developed her preoccupation with this issue further in her "empty dress" series. Once more using her interest in women's fashion as a starting point, Schor began following the logic of form more radically than she had before. Rejecting the figure/ground template of traditional painting, she reduced the dress to its abstract, bare-bones shape, using gouache on paper, tearing away the ground to reach the desired result. Schor was among the earliest artists to work on the image of the dress as an emblem of femininity, along with artists including Judith

Shea, Maureen Connor, and Mimi Smith, as well as Nancy Youdelman and Faith Wilding, who were also in the Feminist Art Program at CalArts. All of these women were seeking to create specifically feminist artwork that would speak to the experience of being a woman in society. In the case of Schor's empty dresses, the category of "woman" is defined by her encasing, the purportedly essentializing outline of her clothing. The very emptiness of this figure is what allows for multiplicity, both politically and aesthetically. In the "empty dress" works, we can see Schor first taking up fully her lifelong concern with art as an arena in which content colludes with form. Schor's dresses recall political content extrinsic to art, yes; but they do so through formal, aesthetic cues beginning with the artist's hand ripping away and thus authoring the ground of the painting, making it synonymous with the woman's figure.

Later that year, Schor was hired to teach at Nova Scotia College of Art & Design in Halifax, Nova Scotia, then, along with CalArts, one of the most advanced art schools in North America. Schor was again a feminist pioneer: in her early twenties, she was the only woman on a fourteen-man fine arts faculty.

The school was notable for its strong early commitment to conceptual art. Here she had a chance to develop the vocabulary of her work even further and incorporate aspects of conceptual art-making into her feminist-inspired dress works. For the first time employing the technique of applying dry pigment and ink on both sides of fragile rice paper, she began to work on a series of "fans," in which she refined the abstract V shape that had defined the general shape of the empty dresses. Those were also the first works in which Schor began to use language in the form of her handwriting as image, and this, of course, had political implications: as Hélène Cixous has famously written of the notion of *écriture féminine*, "Woman must write herself. . . woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement." But it also has aesthetic ones: the fan's V shape signals at motion and transcendence, the double-sidedness of the paper signals at the metaphorical multiplicity of that which is represented, while the writing, in Schor's own words, is "elegantly indecipherable." Its rendering on both sides of the paper, which is then folded up to resemble a lady's fan, emphasizes its formal qualities—language as purely graphic, rather than a specific meaning imparting medium.

Language passes through the hand and so the body, but it is also an intellectual rather than a merely atavistic endeavor. Even if incommunicable, or not readily reducible to a single thing, a woman is full of—in fact overflowing with—thoughts. In *Book of Pages* (1976), Schor took on a major—though, importantly, fragmented rather than large-scale—project. Working on a series of rice paper sheets, employing ink, pigment, and paint on both sides of each notebook-sized page, Schor then layered these one on top of the other. The marks on one page often embossed or transferred onto another, making the sheets both separable and yet part of a whole. Throughout this accrual, the writing is sometimes legible, but often not. The fact that the whole project is comprised of letters to a resistant lover—a male muse—both matters and doesn't. To borrow Barthes's terms from the field of photography, it might be important to consider this piece's *studium*—an unrequited love affair—but it's even more significant to pay attention to the *punctum*—the actual mark on the page, made by a hand, at a certain point in time, ready to be reanimated and considered by a spectator's gaze.

As in *The Two Miras*, the depth and fullness of a woman's psychology is represented here—but this time, more formally and conceptually. In *Book of Pages*, as well as in stand-alone postcards Schor worked on over the same time period, doubleness is once again used to productive effect: pigment, ink, and paint coming from one side often highlight or erase a word written on the other, creating, say, a white halo or blotting out selectively in cobalt, violet, and crimson, and so pressing further on language's synaesthetic flow into abstraction. Increasingly, the half-legible language of dreams is used, as well as snippets of family history. On one *Book of Pages* sheet, Schor jotted down a comparative table, standing for two emblematic sides of her



TOP: TEN MASKS, #9 (FRONT), JULY 13, 1977, INK AND JAPAN GOLD SIZE ON RICE PAPER, 14 BY 7.5 INCHES; ABOVE: BOOK OF PAGES: "PORTUGAL AND AUSCHWITZ," 1976, MIXED MEDIA ON RICE PAPER, C.12 BY 20 BY 1 INCHES



RED HALF, 1981, DRY PIGMENT AND MEDIUM ON RICE PAPER, 14 75 BY 26 25 INCHES
COURTESY CARNEGIE ART MUSEUM COLLECTION, CITY OF OXNARD, GIFT OF THE LANNAN FOUNDATION

personality: on one side the lusty, life-loving “Portugal”; on the other the fearsome, paranoid “Auschwitz”—referencing a link to her parents’ journey from occupied Paris to the vibrant, free Portugal en route to America. In another postcard (reiterated the same year in *Book of Pages*) a shore (a clear homophone of “Schor”) is sketched as part of a dreamscape, with a ferry approaching Provincetown harbor. But, as it often does in dreams, this idyllic scene comes to an abrupt and ominous end, as Auschwitz once again disrupts Portugal: “Then suddenly came a storm and maybe disaster.”

In the late 1970s, Schor began working on the “dress books,” another major group of pieces in which the figure of the empty dress was melded to the V-shape of the fan, and took on the layered function of her books. In this series, sheets of rice paper—made translucent and then painted on from both sides with pigment and pastel—were attached in open-ended layers to make a life-sized book in the shape of a woman’s dress. Marrying the dress with her interest in writing, legibility, and reception, Schor created works that were fragile in their materiality, but also, somehow, aggressive in their fragility. The viewer could approach them (and they were installed to tally with a male viewer’s average height), but he couldn’t touch them (too delicate!) and he certainly couldn’t completely understand them (too illegible!). These ciphers certainly meant something—they were saying so much, after all—but what, exactly?

This question was developed but not completely answered (or rather, developed by not being completely answered) in Schor’s “mask” series from 1977. In multiple rice paper “heads”—hovering somewhere between Marie Antoinette ballroom accessories, tribal costumes, and Halloween garb—Schor was playful and experimental, coming at the task once again from both sides. Sometimes the masks had open mouths, and sometimes no mouths at all. Often they looked as if they’d been burned, or patched, or collapsed in layers; they wore glasses, or frazzled paper “hair”; sometimes their hollowed-out eyes were ringed with kohl-like ink; often they had cursive writing lining their flatness. Sometimes they opened up into perspectival depth, bearing architectural elements—Piranesi-like staircases leading to invariably shut doors. Schor has admitted in conversation that for a long while, she felt a bit embarrassed by this body of work—by its possibly clichéd and primitivist associations. Only now, she says, has she

come to appreciate it as an important precursor to her recent work, in which a mask finally meets the dress—in which the head finally meets the body.



I BEGAN this essay by calling Schor a New York artist, and this is certainly accurate. Born and bred on the Upper West Side, Schor has lived in the same lower Manhattan loft since the late 1970s. But Schor is also a Provincetown artist. She first came to Provincetown with her parents when she was seven years old. The Schors had tried some of the other summer art colonies in the Northeast, Rockport and Woodstock, where they were friendly with Philip Guston and his family, but finally took to Provincetown, where they enjoyed friendships with many people, including the families of Jack Tworikov and of Chaim Gross. Schor fell in love with the place, the landscape of the bay and the ocean, a passion that has grown into a major part of her life, over the course of the summers she spent there, first as

a child, with her parents and sister, and later with her mother and sometimes her sister in the house in the East End that Resia Schor bought in 1969. Resia worked in a small space downstairs, while Mira worked upstairs; Naomi, and then later Mira, wrote at a desk with a view of the bay. The summer of 2010 will mark Schor’s fortieth summer in her beloved house on Anthony Street.

Provincetown has had an effect on Schor’s work and perspective from the very first, not only as another early example of a space where artistic endeavors could exist alongside everyday life, but also because of the passionate attachment Schor has for its ravishing natural world. Indeed, in the early 1980s, Schor turned explicitly to that landscape in her work. Her preoccupation with the figure became more overtly a preoccupation with the figure in landscape, and in a series of paintings—done in gouache and pigment, once again on both sides of rice paper—the colors, outlines, and textures of Provincetown’s physical environment came to the forefront. Schor herself speaks of this period as a “seduction”—away from more explicit political commitments and toward a closer conversation not only with landscape as such, but also with the tradition of American landscape painting, represented by artists such as Marsden Hartley and Arthur Dove. Yet in Schor’s oeuvre, the engagement with the body and with material—even when unaccompanied by a linguistic component—is always in itself political.

By this I mean that the centrality of the powerful female body within landscape, even if abstract, could certainly be taken as a feminist statement. In works such as *Red Half* (1981) or *Two Suns* (1986), Schor uses the template of a skate egg—a pod-like sac found littering the Provincetown shoreline. Though snakelike, potent, and purposeful in both works, this form does not follow the phallic model. In some ways, it is the body of Schor herself, swimming in Provincetown’s waters. And the anti-perspectival flatness of Schor’s compositions, coupled with the working in concert of the paper’s front and back, create an equalized environment in which what matters is not one shape over the other, but the enveloping motion of the artist’s own hand: rubbing, stroking, and layering.

While these developments were going on in Schor’s own landscape, the broader cultural landscape was also shifting rapidly—but in a different direction altogether. It was now the 1980s, and the postmodernist appropriation artists—dubbed “The Pictures Generation”—were achieving critical success



DICKHEADS OR THE SEVEN DWARFS, 1989, OIL ON CANVAS, 20 BY 16 INCHES EACH, INSTALLATION 20 BY 112 INCHES

and market prominence. In political terms, the conversation had shifted: as Schor herself said in *Negative Thinking*, 1970s feminism was now considered “old-hat, marginal and irrelevant,” while painting was thought equally *démodé*, especially for women artists. For Schor, the representative of this trend was David Salle, whom she knew at CalArts. In opposition to Schor’s implicit critique of the phallus in her landscapes—both through the positioning of a strong corporeal female presence in her compositions, as well as by using the “feminine” paper and gouache, rather than the more “masculine” apparatuses of oil on canvas—Salle was, as she saw it, using painting only strategically, while upholding phallic representations to misogynist ends, and being critically and economically celebrated rather than critiqued for it.

But as they say (or if they don’t, they certainly should), there is no phallus mightier than the pen. And 1986 marked Schor’s return to language, but this time, in order to write *about*—rather than within the sphere of—aesthetics: specifically, a scathing, direct appraisal of what she saw as the objectifying, commodifying, and ultimately degrading representation of women in Salle’s painting. In tandem with the adoption of this new critical medium, two things happened: first, Schor joined forces with a friend, the feminist artist Susan Bee, to form the contemporary art journal *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*. In the journal, Bee and Schor were reacting against the flattening of meaning in the age of postmodern art criticism, while recognizing that the holding of an essential, totalized position was also no longer completely possible (hence, the fragmenting virgules in the journal’s title). And second, Schor began, for the first time, to paint in oil on canvas. After fifteen years of refusing the so-called master medium, Schor suddenly found herself in the role of the guardian of painting over and against the critics and artists who were announcing its demise in the age of “art after modernism.”

This was, of course, deeply ironic. Even though Schor’s love for painting as a medium never wavered (as she states in the closing passage of *Wet*, “My heart rests in the ultimately nonlinguistic, ineffable pleasure and deep meaning of the figure/ground interaction, of the visual language of paint”), oil on canvas was not the most predictable choice for her to make, as an artist and thinker who had consistently attempted to claim a space for feminist painting apart from the grandiose ejaculation of oil on canvas. And yet, it also made perfect sense. Learning the language of the opposition in order to subvert it was something that had always interested Schor, and her admiration for the work of a Provincetown family friend and noted member of the AbEx generation, Jack Tworckov, was a case in point. As she states in her introduction to Tworckov’s recently published writings,

I am the first to note the deep strangeness of my serving as the mediating voice for a patriarchal figure who was critical of the content and medium of my early work. As a feminist I am deeply invested in a critique of the kind of power structures that Tworckov represented to me in my youth. However, as an artist, I was instructed deeply in the beliefs of the system that wished to exclude me.

In getting to know painting even more intimately, then, Schor was enacting what she has called a “survival strategy”—wresting the conversation back from the cultural capitalists, and redefining it on her own terms.

In groundbreaking essays such as “Figure/Ground” and “Researching Visual Pleasure” (later collected in *Wet*), Schor linked up formal questions about painting in the post-studio era with a gender critique. In “Figure/Ground,” she positions herself against *October*’s gang of “aesthetics terrorists,” who, she suggests, portray painting as a primitive, animalistic, and, ultimately, feminized endeavor. Those critics, she writes, would like “. . . an art that would be pure, architectural, that would dispense with the wetness of figure . . . (this desire) may find a source in a deeply rooted fear of liquidity, of viscousness, of goo.”

Schor is a fierce writer. Her words are animated by a theoretical framework, but they also have the plainspokenness of true conviction. In her eyes,



SLIT OF PAINT, 1994, OIL ON LINEN, 12 BY 16 INCHES

pigment is political, whether you accept or reject its use, and the decision to subsume sensual material to depersonalized, mediated aesthetic forms has implications. In articulating a resistance to the perspectives advocated by some of the most influential critics and historians in the art world, Schor took career risks in order to defend painting in a way that drew on both feminism and theory, giving many painters who read her words support and courage. Her ability to identify the mechanisms of validation and meaning-making in the art world is inimitable. In essays such as “Patrilineage,” in which she bitingly questioned the overwhelming importance of male artist forebears to art canon formation, or “Recipe Art,” where she mockingly lamented the “high-concept” way in which much art is made nowadays (“something from popular culture + something from art history + something appropriated + something weird or expressive = useful promotional sound bite”) Schor’s writing is sophisticated, art-theoretically inflected, but always approachable. Mostly, it just wallops you with its honesty.

Not a complete surprise, then, that at the time when she began her writing career, the metaphorical seizing of the phallus was also taking place in her actual artistic practice. The “dick paintings” (or, “my penises,” as the artist has dryly called them), which Schor began to paint at that point in oil on canvas, were direct descendants of her earlier landscape studies. In 1987, she taught for a semester at UC Berkeley, and took many sketches of the northern California natural environment. And just as figure evolved into landscape in her work of the late 1970s and early 1980s, landscape slowly began to morph back into bodies in the late 1980s. Shrubs sprouted breasts and sloping bellies and vulvas; trees trailed penises and testicles from their branches. And gradually, the framework of landscape fell away, and the unadorned body itself took center stage. In 1989, she painted *Seven Dwarfs (Dickheads)*, comprised of seven paintings—like *Book of Pages*, it was a major work arrived at through the joining of modest-sized fragments. Red penis heads are rendered in oil on canvas, using the medium of painting to make a political point about power, mediation, and gender. As Schor wrote in *Wet*,

That these were in the full sense of both terms *political paintings* was exactly what I was trying to achieve: a visual and conceptual experience whose political content was all the more powerful given that the message of the challenging image was embedded in the seductive potential of oil paint, painting not as “eye candy” but as a synergic honey-trap for contemporary discourse.

Some of Schor’s “dickheads” are adorned with ears (in fact, to my eyes, more than one is presciently reminiscent of George W. Bush’s person!). Condoms are attached to others, like little red caps, or perhaps more menacingly, like missile heads, stained in blood. Their paint is glazed and

glossy, creating tension between comfortable finish and uncomfortable content. Schor's granting these "dickheads" the status of self-important portrait sitters is an act that is simultaneously comical and critical.

The term "dick" stands for several things. The crassness of the signifier suggests the aggression attached to its signified, which is certainly the body/the penis itself, but, also, the phallus: the location the body occupies in language, and following that, in ideology. And indeed, in this period of Schor's career, the question of engagement between language and the body reemerges. This time, however, both are made less personal and more political. A penis, an ear, a breast—all of these body parts become receptacles and transmitters for language, and, thus, of meaning. In multiple canvas works such as *Alterity* (1991) or *War Frieze* (1991–1994), language flows like liquid through the body and out into the world, where it eventually enters and affects the ground of the body once again.

Gender politics are at play here, certainly: in a panel of *Alterity*, for instance, penis and breast, "mama" and "dada," are collaborators in the transmission of language, but also adversaries: the penis and the ear form a handgun-like contraption, turning the faint ribbon of "mama" milk delivered from the breast into the forceful, darker script of "dada." Schor's paintings from this period mark theory and the conceptual as spaces useful for both the feminine and the painterly. In paintings such as *Slit of Paint* (1994), Schor signals at the separation between the corporeal and linguistic by layering punctuation marks in her paint. The lexicon of references that these works suggest could extend anywhere from art historical figures such as Jasper Johns, Judy Chicago, and Mary Kelly, or literary influences such as the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, including Charles Bernstein, the husband of Schor's coeditor Bee. In these works, Schor is reconfiguring feminist art as well as, importantly, the story of modernism.

Indeed, as Schor notes as an aside to herself across several panels of *War Frieze*, "It's Modernism, Stupid." After years of battling the macho AbEx masters of oil, she was now appropriating their medium confidently and immersively, and experimenting more freely with her painting process. *War Frieze*, for instance—which she began working on at the inception of the first, "quickie" Gulf War, but which took her three years to fully complete—was comprised of dozens of small canvases creating a continuous, two-hundred-running-foot piece, with language itself the main form in which this painterly experimentation proceeded. Words and letters are repeated ("Joy" is one recurring figure at the end of the entire work), but their material manifestation is extremely variable: sometimes glazed and cracked, sometimes glossy, sometimes coagulated, and sometimes barely covering the raw linen. Wetness and dryness, thickness and thinness, deliberation and happenstance, scraping and layering, and the general changeability of the figure/ground relationship were occupying Schor much more in this period than they ever had before.

In choosing the words she will paint, Schor often employs her own form of appropriation from the culture around her, selecting words or sentences because of their potential multiple meanings. Thus, in *War Frieze*, Schor represented the words "area of denial," the name of a type of weapon described on *Nightline*, which Schor felt alluded to the body as an area of denial, and even the body of *painting* as an area of denial in the contemporary art world she was engaged in. Schor draws attention to the sentence and opens it up to further interpretation, while at the same time, the depicted words become empty hangers for the aesthetic—vessels whose meaning would compel the viewer to look at them initially, only to then drop away, highlighting the abstraction and painterliness of their form.

After completing *War Frieze* in 1994, Schor turned to a more specific concentration on the meeting point between painting and writing. In the mid- to late- 1990s, she literally collapsed the two into each other, by simultaneously writing color and painting language, in works such as *Flesh*, in which she inscribed the word itself into thickly set, flesh-colored paint. By this point in her career, Schor's command of oil paint's variability became reminiscent of her control of gouache and rice paper, achieved in her double-sided works of the 1970s and '80s.

For Schor, paint on canvas has depth—sometimes literally, but also metaphorically. The body, seemingly set aside in the works of the mid- to late-1990s for a more formal exploration of language, is still here. Flesh is flesh, even if it's unattached to an actual body; and even more deeply, oil paint, as well as writing, are for Schor the body—albeit a body that is often mediated



A LIFE, 2008, INK, GRAPHITE, AND GESSO ON LINEN, 16 BY 12 INCHES

by language and abstraction. In word installations such as *Personal Writing* (1994) and *Sexual Pleasure* (1998), Schor explored exactly this mediation by painting these titular phrases in her own free handwriting, a letter per panel, and installing the canvases alongside others on which the proper cursive writing that she'd learned at the Lycée Français was painted. Ironically, of course, at the very moment when the unfettered work of the hand is juxtaposed against its institutional counterpart, one realizes that the purported free body here is anything but, as even the handwritten letters are blown up and traced deliberately. Adding an additional layer of complication to these works is the element of paint, in which the body suddenly reappears. In *Sexual Pleasure*, the corporeal possibility of the term is expressed not in the lettering, but in the vibrantly luxurious reds, pinks, and yellows. The first S of one of the "sexual pleasure" iterations is a juicy crimson depression in creamy scarlet paint, another is a bright marigold monochrome, while yet another is a damp trace of red smeared atop a white background.

This visual dialect of the hazy trace continued to play a part in Schor's work of the early 2000s. In pieces that were exploring the concept of repetition with a difference—with the artist's handwriting enlarged and traced twice in ink, one iteration bleeding through, though not dissolving into, the other over gesso on white canvas as well as on paper—Schor was doing some of her most personal work to date. Teaching, attempting to write a follow-up book to 1997's *Wet*, taking care of her nonagenarian mother, and painting, Schor often felt that she was juggling too many balls. She was sometimes concerned she would not be able to complete all the projects she was working on (particularly her second book: at one point, she thought she'd have to just paint the ideas for the book as one-sentence headlines!). This sense of insufficiency was reflected in a series of paintings in which the phrase "There's No Time to Make Art" is repeated; in several other works, the word "Trace" is featured, its meaning reflected in the delicate, ghostly line with which it's drawn. The need to create, Schor suggests, is the need to leave a trace of oneself—no matter how modest.

And, as Schor's essay "Modest Painting" proposes, this modesty is a goal rather than a failing. Painting need not be monumental, flashy, or self-branding in order to leave a lasting impression. Quite the opposite: the

existence of reticent, careful painting that doesn't ostentatiously announce its own importance, helps to "(sharpen) our perception of images in a softer light." In the booming, hyperkinetic art market of the early aughts, this was an especially valid political point.



"Then suddenly came a storm or maybe disaster": from 2001 on, Schor began reusing this early snippet from *Book of Pages* in a truncated form. The word "Suddenly," painted on canvas in a handwriting identical to that used in the earlier work, became an emblem of a state of being that Schor knew intimately from childhood, but that was reconfirmed to her by the events of that year. As she wrote in *Negative Thinking*, "I read once that people who lost their parents as children always have a certain attitude called 'and suddenly.'" Coming from a family of Holocaust refugees and losing her father at a young age had made "shocking loss (seem) familiar." But the events of the first half of the new decade proved especially trying. September 11 came first—a disaster that Schor witnessed at close range, as her Tribeca loft is located only fourteen blocks north of the World Trade Center towers. Three months later came Naomi Schor's sudden death from a cerebral hemorrhage; and, finally, in 2006, Resia Schor's passing. Schor was now "the only person left of (her) beloved and interesting family."

Schor described to me how she felt as she was grieving, first over her sister and later over her mother: "People would ask me how I was, and there were literally no words for me to express how I was feeling." When saying and meaning prove useless, what does an artist who has been engaged with language in one form or another since the inception of her career do? Schor began painting empty speech bubbles, reflecting the sense of "deep existential loneliness" that she was experiencing. The summer of 2007, after her mother's death, she worked in Provincetown, not only on canvas, but also in notebooks, once again using small-scale paper sheets as intimate spaces for exploration of new territory. Employing mostly black and white, with sudden flashes of yellow and orange, these works were in some ways the exact antithesis of *Book of Pages*. Woman was no longer full of words, but completely devoid of them. Oftentimes, the rounded forms Schor painted are blacked out, like heavy lead balloons; sometimes they're filled with abstract lines (perhaps a darker version of the speech of Snoopy's little friend, Woodstock the bird); and sometimes they're ghostly white. In the ironic *Portrait of My Brain* (2007), yellowish gunk aggressively, thickly, shades a speech bubble on a black background. The mind has now become a depository for useless matter, an abstraction that does not open up to utopian possibilities but is rather a type of endgame.

By the summer of 2008, Schor was slightly less overwhelmed by grief, and language began to creep back minimally into her compositions. Before their respective deaths, Resia and Naomi had attempted to trace their family's lineage in the form of a family tree. That summer, Schor resumed that project from her own perspective. Listing the names of her many deceased relatives and pinning them to the wall, she then formalized the memory of these people, most of whom she never knew, a family lineage of which she was effectively the only remaining descendant. Instead of actual names, now Schor's speech bubbles began to contain the handwritten words "a life."

This might seem a grim project, and in some ways, it was. These people had lived once, and they were no longer living. Most devastatingly for Schor, now Ilya, Naomi, and Resia were gone. But at the same time, by repeating those words over and over again, Schor was not only affirming that "a life" was something that had happened and was worth commemorating, but also that *her* life would go on. Toward the end of that same summer, Schor painted the work *Cool Guy*, in which a brownish balloon links up to another, white balloon, sporting a pair of comically large, brown sunglasses. The sprouting of a buoyant human figure out of blocked brown sludge reflects how Schor's sense of humor and hope could emerge even from the most melancholy of circumstances. The fact that this work was meant at least in part as a portrait of Barack Obama, also signals an opening up to the world and its possibilities beyond personal devastation. Once more, Auschwitz and Portugal negotiated a productive if not completely easy partnership.

In 2009, Schor began painting the full figure for the first time since her "Story Paintings" of the early 1970s. In paintings on paper and canvas, in ink and slicks of oil paint, she imagined herself as a stick figure—head



A WALK, 2009, INK AND GESSO ON LINEN, 16 BY 20 INCHES

and body combined—striding across a white expanse often dotted with pitfalls. In *A Walk*, she creates a sense of movement by drawing her line several times, in different-colored inks, each slightly separated from the other and bleeding through layers of gesso. This time, the bespectacled figure is no longer Obama, but a skirt-wearing stand-in for Schor herself. A figure in peril, she is surrounded on all sides by foreboding, darkened speech bubbles, one stick leg almost stumbling into an open grave lying in her path. Again, this would be a disheartening painting if it weren't for the comic, near-slapstick element here. The square-headed Schor, her glasses oversized, her face featureless, is as blank as a Buster Keaton/Harold Lloyd hybrid. But the character's vulnerability, coupled with her obvious momentum forward (who knows—maybe she'll evade the trap at the last moment?) make us root for her, laughing a little as we dab at a secret tear.

Because this is the thing about Schor. "A life"—and, more to the point, an intensely *creative* life—will keep on being lived. Paintings will get painted; writings will be written. And if the prone, swimming figure of a woman in the multiple landscape paintings she made this past year sometimes looks as if she's dead or dying, in fact she's just floating on her back. She's looking up, contemplating the gorgeous Provincetown sky through her dark glasses, feeling the warm sun and the green slickness of the water on her skin, and thinking of an idea for a new essay or a new painting, or, perhaps, of a new balloon to sprout out of her self-portrait.

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ILYA, MIRA, AND RESIA SCHOR, PROVINCETOWN, 1957

Excerpts from THE EXTREME OF THE MIDDLE: WRITINGS OF JACK TWORKOV

EDITED BY MIRA SCHOR

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009

All quotes are followed by the individual entry number assigned to them in the book followed by the page number.

**Journal entry, January 21, 1947**

Style is the effect of pressure. A body of water is still or turbulent according to the bed, the course—obstacles present or absent, environment such as open or sheltered shores, etc. In the artist the origin of pressure is in his total life—heredity, experience and will (he has to will to be an artist)—but the direction flows according to the freedom he allows his creative impulse. [...]

A man could walk away from his “pressures”—he could gamble, whore, drink, make money, turn to crime, waste himself in laziness, go insane, or commit suicide. He chooses instead to become an artist. 3.1, 33

Journal entry, October 24, 1951

Everyone who is an artist does it at the expense of being a hero. 3.13, 41

From “A Cahier Leaf,” It Is, no. 1 (Spring 1958)

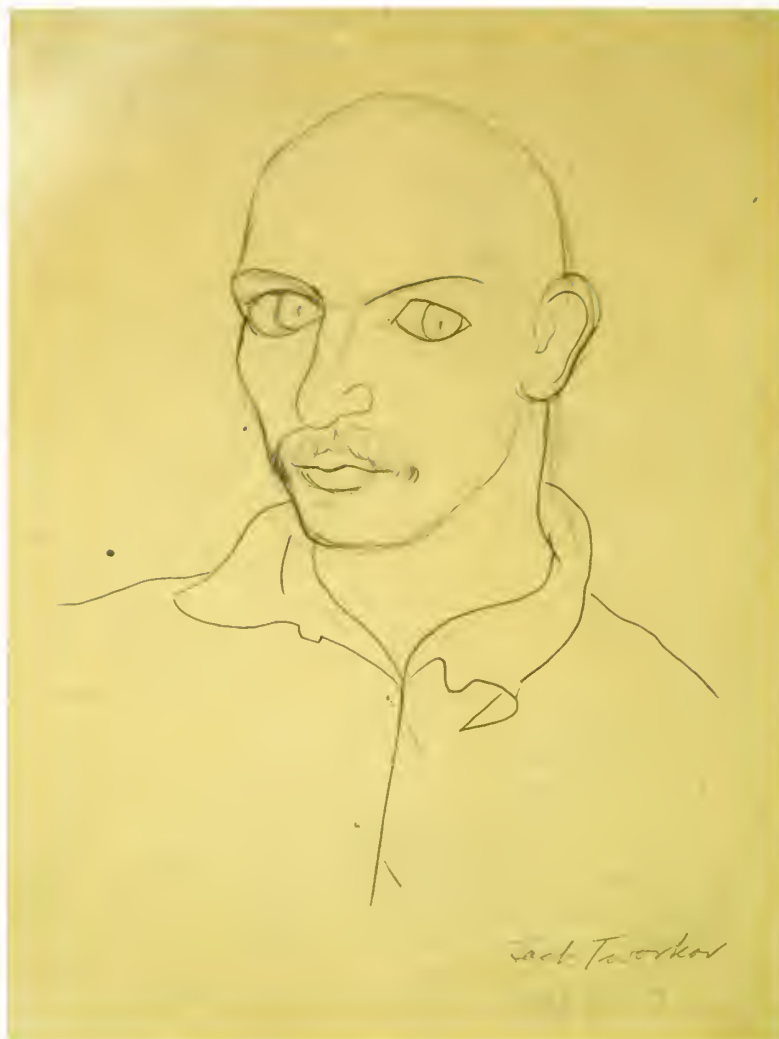
No artist is an artist all by himself. He is an artist only by virtue of the fact that he voluntarily permits other artists to act on him, and that he has the capacity to react in turn. The artist who acts as if he could have conceived his art by himself, sealed off from other artists and their work and their thoughts, is stupid—he merely tries to conform to the idiotic romantic image of the artist as a primeval energy, as a demi-urge. The continual inner-action of ideas among artists is the very condition for the existence of an artist. There could no more be one artist than there could be one man. 3.251, 168

Journal entry, September 14, 1953

All that exists is contained.

The transformation from seed to grape to wine marks a succession of containers. Blood is contained. We are a vessel for blood. Let the blood out of a container and it ceases.

What contains is as nearly a miracle as the substance. 3.31, 51



JACK TWORKOV (1900–1982), *SELF-PORTRAIT*, c. 1925, GRAPHITE ON PAPER, 12 BY 9 INCHES
PAAM COLLECTION, GIFT OF SHELBY SHACKELFORD, 1984

Journal entry, August 28, 1952

I'm torn between the calligraphic and the structural—in between the exuberance of movement and the passion of meditation. 3.19, 44

Journal entry, February 2, 1959

In such paintings as *Water Game*, *Pink Mississippi*, *Cradle*, *Transverse* and others the mood is anything but lyrical if I take lyrical to mean singing, subjective, moody. The central image of these paintings [is] an action brought near by a telescope but out of earshot, silent and meaningless. In a thicker the actors might be lovers, or a murderer and his victim—the anxiety is that of silence of an action without sound, without meaning. When the spectator identifies himself as one of the actors he wakes up screaming and nothing is there. ... My painting is a painting of motion before the collision, its anxiety comes from being before the collision. 3.106, 89

Letter to Andrew Forge, June 30, 1981

So for me geometrics, however simple and

elementary, is a connection with something that exists besides, outside, myself. It is a small comfort, perhaps, indeed; but it is less hypocritical at the moment than the apparent ecstatic self-expression that a more romantic art calls for. Geometrics or any systemic order gives me a space for meditation, adumbrates my alienation. 8.47, 421

Journal entry, March 1966

[...] The complete rebel is a non-artist. I cherish de Kooning's remark: “I'm on a railroad track that goes all the way back to Mesopotamia.” How right he was. 4.17, 227

Journal entry, February 16, 1959

The essence of our new art is that instead of being a representation of an experience, the painting is the experience itself. 3.113, 92

From “Notes on My Painting,” 1974

[...] the work which I have exhibited contains, I believe, an element of self-portrayal which for better or worse I can reconcile to myself without embarrassment. I would not be comfortable with a painting that was too aggressively stated or too sleek or too self-consciously simple, or too beautiful or too interesting. I am uncomfortable with extreme portrayals. I let reason examine disorder. A certain amount of censorship results which one could call form. [...]

Above all else, I distinguish between painting and pictures (between Cézanne and Picasso). Where I have to choose between them, I choose painting. If I have to choose between painting and ideas I choose painting; between painting and every form of theater I choose painting. 1.3, 6 & 13

Panel discussion notation, from “Contemporary Voices in the Arts,” January 28, 1967

You can draw a dream on a drafting board with a 4H pencil—if you are wide awake to the dream. 4.33, 239

Jack Tworlov A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

BY STANLEY KUNITZ

This is a memorial tribute delivered at the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, April 2, 1985, and first published in the inaugural issue of Provincetown Arts, August 1985.

MY FRIENDSHIP WITH JACK TWORLOV DATES BACK TO THE midfifties, when I married into the New York world of painting. During the summer of 1962, while Elise Asher and I were occupying a rented studio on the bay in Provincetown, the Tworlovs encouraged us to buy the property next door to them that had become available at a bargain price. We took it as a compliment that Jack and Wally wanted us to be their new neighbors, succeeding the recently deceased abutter, who had enjoyed some local celebrity as a retired madame. After we moved in, one of the first things I did, by mutual agreement, was to plant a tall hedge between our adjoining properties. This was a symbolic gesture, as important to all of us as the maintenance of the walk connecting our two houses. Friendship survived and flourished; so did our respect for each other's privacy.

Jack was the soul of courtesy, tact, and diplomacy. One summer the rock willow in the corner of my rear garden took ill and began to exude a horrible gummy substance that ruined the finish of Jack's trusty old station wagon parked beneath it in his driveway. Jack's way of solving this embarrassment was to send Wally over to negotiate with me the removal of the offending limb at his own expense.

Jack took good care of everything—his car, his house, his lawn, his tools, his studio, his brushes, his family, himself. Nobody could have lived a more admirably moderate, regulated, or disciplined life. In this regard he resembled Immanuel Kant, of whom it was said that when the housewives of Königsberg saw him emerge for his afternoon constitutional, they would set their clocks. Jack's routines were equally predictable. He rose and ate his meals and went to bed on schedule. Each day on the Cape he walked a prescribed distance, and each day swam a prescribed number of strokes. He was a martinet about work habits, keeping his studio hours sacred and inviolable. Such Apollonian conscientiousness put me to shame. When I was grubbing in the garden or playing with my cat or reading for pleasure on the porch, I would think of Jack next door toiling in his studio and quote to myself Yeats's guilty line, "All things can tempt me from this craft of verse."

Among the tasks to which Jack assiduously applied himself was the keeping of a journal. He was highly literate, a devoted reader of fiction and poetry, and a trenchant writer, as his notebooks demonstrate. Portions of his journal have appeared in periodicals, but the entire work, from what I have seen, is a remarkable testament that should be collected and published. [*The Extreme of the Middle: Writings of Jack Tworlov*, edited by Mira

Schor, was published in 2009 by Yale University Press.] He was born in Biała, Poland, in 1900 and came to this country at the age of thirteen. In New York, at Stuyvesant High School, he enrolled in a drawing class. As a student at Columbia University, which later awarded him an honorary doctorate, he majored in English literature.

The extended Tworlov family, it should be noted, is exceptionally rich in literary and artistic associations. Jack's sister Janice, a distinguished painter known internationally as Biala, from her place of origin, lives in Paris with her husband, the Alsatian painter Daniel Brustlein, who for many years contributed to the *New Yorker* as the cartoonist Alain. Biala was previously allied to the renowned English novelist Ford Madox Ford, for whom Wally typed manuscripts in her teens, during the period when she became Jack's model and eventually his wife. A Tworlov daughter, married to the painter Robert Moskowitz, is herself a painter under the name of Hermine Ford, thus perpetuating the family tradition.

Jack was greatly valued and loved as a teacher. One of his early posts was at Black Mountain College, where he met a number of avant-garde artists and writers who were to remain lifelong friends. In 1963 his teaching career culminated in his appointment to the chairmanship of the art department at the Yale School of Art and Architecture, a job he held until 1969. Several of his students, with whom he remained in close contact, emerged as dominant figures in the new wave of the seventies and eighties. It never occurred to Jack to feel threatened by them. He was also actively involved in the shaping of the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, a resident community of artists and writers, which owes a great deal to his support and influence.

In his craft, Jack Tworlov was a master who could do almost anything exquisitely well: draw from the model, paint portraits and still lifes, make his distinctively flaming mark in the slant gestures of his Abstract Expressionist phase—but ultimately it was the divisions and proportions of the grid and the beauty of geometry that enchanted him. He embraced Goethe's dictum that art exists in limits. Within the limits he had set for himself, he asserted that he had all the freedom he needed or wanted. I have heard him wax eloquent on his fascination with the game of chess and the mysteries of the golden section. On countless sheets of paper he plotted his diagrammatic visions and revisions, which developed into the substructure, the formal ground, of his delicate brushwork. He made me think of that extraordinary passage, in the *Philebus* of Plato, where Socrates says, "I will try to speak of the beauty of shapes, and I do not mean, as most people would suppose, the shapes of living figures, or their imitations in painting, but I mean straight lines and curves and the shapes made from them by the lathe, ruler, or square.

They are not beautiful for any particular reason or purpose, as other things are, but are eternally, and by their very nature, beautiful, and give a pleasure of their own quite free from any itch of desire."

Perhaps, I sometimes thought, he had sacrificed too much to achieve this crystal purity of his art. He had abandoned Abstract Expressionism of the gestural variety, because he felt, in his own words, that his painting "had reached a stage where its forms had become predictable and automatically repetitive. Besides, the exuberance that was a condition of the birth of this painting could not be maintained without pretense forever."

His intention certainly was not to exclude "instinctive and sometimes random play." On the contrary, "What I wanted was a simple structure dependent upon drawing as a base on which the brushing, spontaneous and pulsing, gave a beat to the painting somewhat analogous to the beat in music." That ritualistic beat was the signature, the genius, of his late abstract style.

Like most artists, Jack Tworlov went through alternating cycles of pride and doubt, with respect to his own work. He was fearful of settling for what he called "the civilized dance." Few contemporaries would have the courage to say, as he did toward the end, "I have misgivings about my present work." He had chosen an art that did not strive for overt significance or meaning. Now he began to feel, as he put it, "some inner deprivation, some sorrowful regret that my art is not explicitly some expression of existence outside and beyond myself." He would not deny that when art loses its touch with human and societal values, it is reduced to existing "for itself by itself." "This is misery," he commented. "But where is the way out?"

There is a terrifying honesty in a man who is not ashamed to confess, "I have seen my work not merely as a way of life, but a way to save my life." The dilemma of style, he perceived, had implications beyond the periphery of self-gratification. "Art can pollute our life," he was convinced, "as much as technology can pollute our air and water."

For reasons I do not pretend to understand, Jack Tworlov was not elected to this Institute until he was eighty-one. Even then—this was a year before his death—the bounce and vigor of his stride reflected a superlative health and wholesomeness of experience. He had humorous eyes and a weather-beaten, country face with a touch of the Slav in it. Something about his appearance reminded me of the puckered and sweet russet apples that grew in the orchards of my childhood. That image remains with me, along with a sense of all the civilization at his fingertips and in his bones.

STANLEY KUNITZ received both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for his poetry. Along with Jack Tworlov, he was one of the founders of the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

Concerning My Teacher, Jack Tworkov

BY GEORGE LLOYD

JACK TWORKOV WAS MY TEACHER AT THE YALE SCHOOL OF ART, WHERE we met regularly for tutorial sessions, as well as for group critiques, over the course of the 1968–1969 academic year. Although the dialogue between Tworkov and myself was certainly a productive one, I can't honestly say that his highly sophisticated brand of thinking was entirely understood by my more youthful self. Many years would pass before I would be able to fully absorb his lessons.

Forty years later, my memory of Tworkov is still vivid. His thoughts and opinions continue to exert an influence on my artistic development to this present day. Here are a few examples, if not in Tworkov's exact words, then paraphrased to the best of my ability:

Tworkov often expressed great distrust of utopian notions; he felt that evidence provided by the events of recent history would be sufficient to thoroughly discredit them.

Tworkov was a keen advocate of projects involving collaboration between art and technology, of which the light show installed in the A & A Building circa 1968 by the Pulsa group would be a prime example. Nor did he shrink from the occasional application of mathematical concepts in relation to his own work.

He remarked that, at his age, he was no longer reading much fiction; nonfiction works were now his preference. However, his reading of *Ulysses* by James Joyce, during an earlier period of his development, had transformative consequences on his painting.

The color green was highly problematic for him, due to the overly optimistic connotations of that hue.

For Tworkov, the phenomenon of the monochromatic painting was in large part a consequence of a painter's frustration with making a form or set of forms that would satisfy him.

He felt that the pencil was the ideal instrument to record visual observations.

He often remarked that a pristine and freshly prepared canvas was an apogee of perfection and an ideal object for contemplation; in that sense, impossible to be improved upon.

His expectation of himself in terms of production would be circa eight paintings per year.

In his later years, he recalled a time, in the immediate postwar period, when it had been possible to approach a canvas in a state of open anticipation, an attitude that neither he nor his contemporaries were able to sustain. Spontaneity was a limited proposition.

Tworkov's paintings would evolve through various states. At times, others would urge him to desist from working on a particular piece, but he would nonetheless feel compelled to



This picture has been conceived and executed in a very painterly fashion. The figure has been compressed and flattened so as to float atop its ground, like a fragment of tree bark upon the surface of a lake. Similar to the attenuated figures of Giacometti, its rough and raggedy edges do not allude to roundness. A more traditional rendering of the figure via classical contour has been abjured in favor of the determining sweep of the painter's brush.

The painting has been configured so that the container rectangle is experienced as a kind of Procrustean bed upon which the figure has been stretched out and accommodated. Indeed, the head has been extended on both sides so as to form a kind of pillow behind it. Contrast between figure and ground has been effectively eliminated and the sexual gender of the figure rendered indeterminate. The sense of focus at the top or head section is sufficiently blurry so as to create a sensation of melting. The figure, so to speak, has not yet fully emerged from the block, but is depicted in the process of becoming itself. The bright red color evokes the unstable nature of fire itself, yet the overall impression is one of exquisitely calibrated classical proportion.

JACK TWORKOV (1900–1982), *FIGURE CD*, 1960, OIL ON CANVAS, 42 BY 23 INCHES
THE ESTATE OF JACK TWORKOV (COURTESY ACME FINE ART, BOSTON)

persist, despite the fact that his initial modifications would appear to detract from the appearance of his painting. In the end, he said that the successive revisions would produce a superior result.

There are no bad paintings, he declared, only unfinished ones.

As a practical matter, he felt a contemporary painter could be considered to be the equivalent of a small business owner who maintains a shop, manages an inventory, and keeps his own books.

Income that he had earned from the sale of his paintings would seem to outlast income he earned from other sources. Early in his career, he sold an entire show to a single collector—at a great reduction in price. Despite the discount, he was greatly pleased by the sale.

He remarked that degrees for artists were useless in the sense that society had no real need of protection from the work of incompetent practitioners.

He bemoaned the decline of sartorial standards on campus. He lamented that young men were neglecting to wear a sport coat.

Tworkov on artists and the history of art:

Hieronymus Bosch was an artist of great literary imagination, but Velásquez and Cézanne were not.

The Renaissance and the Baroque culminated in Velásquez, whose works were the absolute pinnacle of painting in Europe.

Eighteenth-century painting was greatly inferior to that of the preceding seventeenth and the following nineteenth centuries.

Modigliani was an artist with legitimate, but limited appeal. Good for some, but not enough for him.

Soutine and de Kooning were beyond carpentry or craft. Irrational factors were predominant in their work. Consequently, the area of the painting rectangle would never suffice to contain them. The overflow of emotion and expressive force would not be compromised.

When as a young man Tworkov encountered the works of Matisse for the first time, he thought they were harbingers of a new era in respect to attitudes about sex and sexuality. For him, they evoked a kind of pre-Christian arcadia, and a return to a more hedonistic and guilt-free Classical ethos.

Tworkov often expressed a healthy contempt for art historians in general by stating that artistic expression of all sorts had flourished for thousands of years without them.

GEORGE LLOYD is a painter who has lived in Maine for the past twenty-five years. He has exhibited widely and his work is in museum collections on both coasts. He is represented by Acme Fine Art in Boston.

Constantine Manos AND THE AMERICAN COLOR PROJECT

PROVINCETOWN SHOULD KNOW MORE about Constantine Manos. At the age of thirteen he joined the junior high school camera club, a momentous event; it became the direction his life would take. By age fifteen, he was a working professional. His father, “like all Greek immigrants,” owned a restaurant. The son built his own dark-room in the basement of the family house. Searching for role models, he began to dream of becoming a *Life* photographer, and he became aware of some of the Magnum photographers, including Henri Cartier-Bresson and Robert Capa, who supplied the magazine with their full-page, dramatic glimpses of exotic spots around the globe.

Believability derives from the fact of capturing a fragment of a second. The eye can see, but the

decisive photograph can remember. Characteristic of Manos’s recent color photographs is the presence of people, devoid of the identification of their faces. The world is populated with personalities, but, insinuated into the fraction of time they are present, their faces are veiled, out of frame, in shadow, or with their backs turned. The context for the decisive moment is the action of people living their lives. In his earlier work, you could see into the faces and eyes of people, feel their expressions, and notice the wrinkles in their skin. He did not want specific faces. He wanted presences. He likes the idea of looking at the backs of heads as they are looking at something else, so he is seeing what they’re seeing and thinking about what is before them.

Manos’s images began to show keen concerns for the borders of their frames, the border being the place where experience ends and absence begins. Often his faces will be out of frame, so the personality of the person becomes less important than the composition or the color or the activity of any person’s body. Poignantly, he combines soft yellows with wan, pale blues. He subdues blinding light by finding secrets in shadows. His color pairings are acutely in touch, exquisitely balanced, like a duet in a pleasing song. A consistent feature is a sense of surprise—what is a “decisive moment” but a shock of surprising recognition, energy made visible in a flash. The finger that pushed the button was triggered by an impulse in the unconscious.

—CHRIS BUSA



Made in Daytona Beach during Bike Week, this photograph illustrates the serendipity involved in this type of photography, the cyclist’s shadow and the hanging telephone receiver—all vitalized by light, shadow, and color.

THE AMERICAN COLOR PROJECT, WHICH I began in the early 1980s, has thus far yielded two books of photographs—*American Color* (1995), and *American Color 2* (2010). Together the books present 210 pictures from the thousands of pictures in the complete body of work to date.

This new project was precipitated by a midlife crisis caused by the fact that I was no longer challenged by my black-and-white personal photography, which had always been the mainstay and inspiration for my work. I had come to a dead end and had nothing new to say; color and a new way of seeing came to my rescue.

The beginnings of this new direction were tentative. Ultimately, I found myself drawn to an

aspect of America about which I had always been curious, but never had the courage or vision to approach. This was the America of public places and events that attracted ordinary people, and it would provide the raw material for a new kind of photograph for me. For a person who had grown up in a cloistered Greek-American family in the American South, this was an exotic world filled with color, strange moments, and possibilities—for me more exotic than India or China.

Places like Venice Beach, Daytona Beach, and Miami Beach were my destinations. At first the pictures were pretty straightforward, and the difficulty of making interesting photographs in color was the greatest challenge. Over time the pictures

evolved into something more abstract and personal. Then I saw a quote by Rimbaud: “In all things beautiful there is something strange.” I came to value photographs that had a life of their own, that did not need captions, and existed for their own sake. It was not enough to merely record how something looked. It was important to make images that had never been seen before, images that were surprises.

The search for photographs in the American Color Project has been a thrilling adventure. It has brought back the heady early days when photography was a hobby and a passion for me. And it is never too late to find a new passion.

— CONSTANTINE MANOS



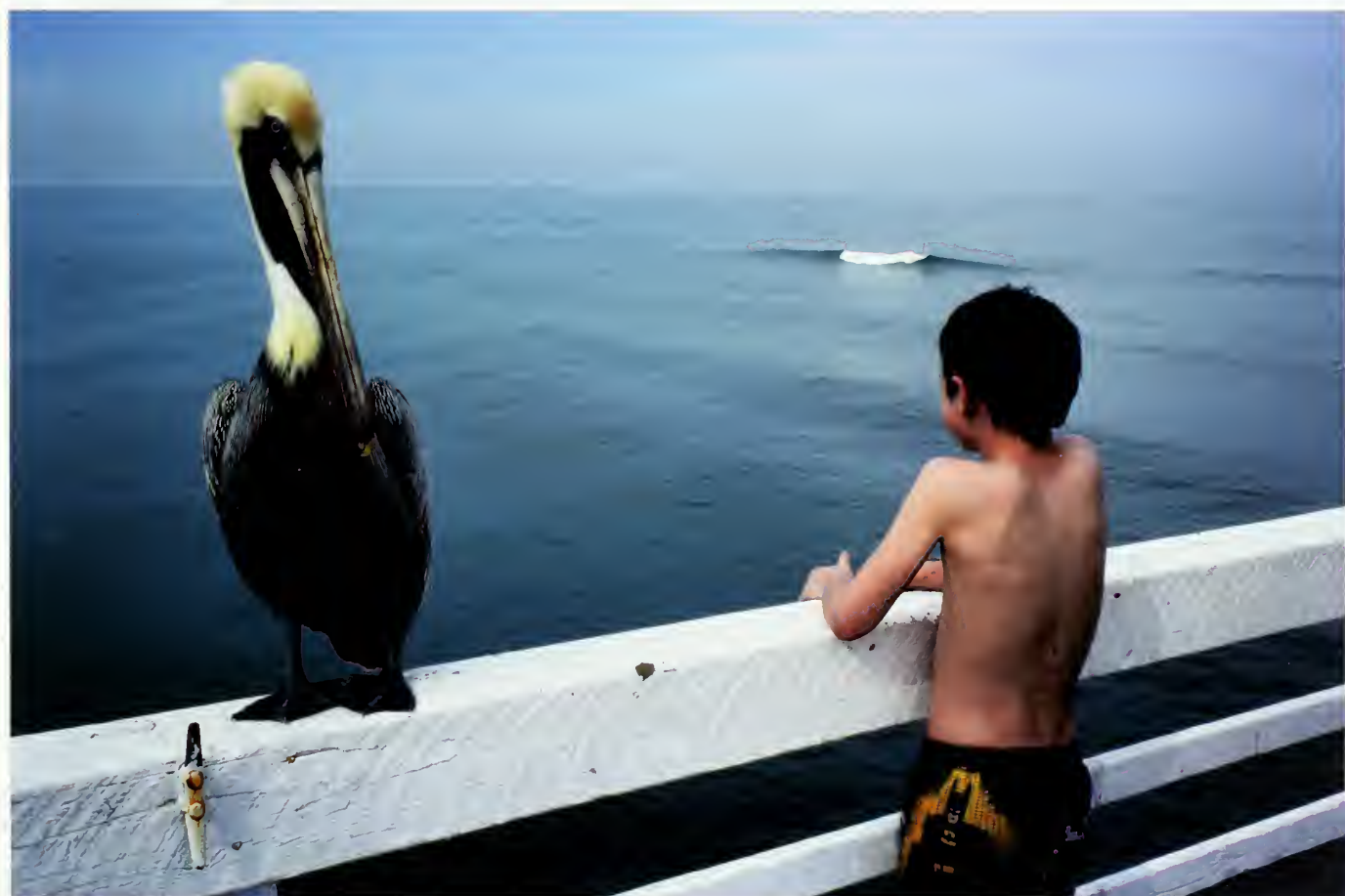
This picture of a beautiful girl in black asks the question: who is she and what is happening here? Made during Bike Week in Daytona Beach, this enigmatic image is one of my favorites, a picture that gives continuing pleasure.



This photograph was made at Daytona Beach during spring break and is a "real" as opposed to "surreal" picture. It tells a simple story of girls and boys, all of whom are in perfect alignment within the filled frame.



In an outdoor bar in Daytona Beach, the shadow was creeping up the wall as the sun was setting. Just before losing my light I caught this man as he strolled up and took a swig from his beer.



On the fishing pier at Daytona Beach, away from the craziness of Bike Week, a boy contemplates the sea in the company of a pelican. The wave in the distance is the defining moment of the picture.



An empty outdoor concert stage at Venice Beach was the favorite jumping-off point for some skateboarders. It was a matter of pushing the button at the right moment—1/1000th of a second.



An amusement park in Fort Lauderdale was the setting for this picture of a Ferris wheel operator taking a puff on his cigarette. Chiaroscuro, the juxtaposition of light and dark, is one of my favorite photographic devices.

CONSTANTINE MANOS is a member of the prestigious photojournalist cooperative Magnum. His work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others. His books include *Portrait of a Symphony*, *A Greek Portfolio*, *Bostonians*, *American Color*, and *American Color 2*. Manos lives in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Signed books are available at the Magnum Store, magnumphotos.com. For more information on publications, go to: constantinemanos.com.

Lora Brody's WATERVIEWS

BY DENISE DOHERTY PAPPAS

THE ARABS HAVE A SAYING, "SHOW me your neighbors and I will tell you where to live." When my husband and I purchased a home in Provincetown a decade ago, I met my neighbor Lora Brody, who was creating stunning photographs a few steps from my door. We became fast friends; I watched her work evolve, using Provincetown as the setting.

In this community of flamboyant personalities, outrageous talents, and legendary egos, I admire Brody for carefully concentrating on her task of making sumptuous underwater photographs, using a digital camera fitted with a pinhole cover. An intensity of color reveals the magic of light as it passes through water. The tiny opening of the camera records the happy accident of swimmers in motion, condensing color into supersaturated surprises. Since her camera has no focus, there are no boundaries; each shot is an honest discovery.

Two Men in the Pool (2006) succeeds in depicting two figures by shadow and shape, simultaneously figurative and abstract. Uncropped, unmanipulated, these pictures make me want to join them in their aqua dream. The Caribbean blue is the common background for each image in the *Pool Pinhole Series*.

Brody highlights the fleeting impressions of swimmers. She eagerly seeks new recruits, and most agree to be photographed when they realize their images will be gesture sketches rather than exacting, realistic portraits. Although these are not glamour photos, every subject looks beautiful in water. Redheads, children, athletes, and couples are all part of her canvas. Brody's "body electric" celebrates the joy of water in this peninsula of pleasure.

Mike Carroll, owner of the Schoolhouse Gallery, which is exhibiting this series, commented on how he was struck not only by the technical innovation in these photos, but also by the power inherent in her carefully chosen perspective: "The strength of her position allows us to trust her vision and let go into the images—which are of joy and physical volume, color and motion suspended in time, gravity and possibility, and the wide-eyed

stammering of a mature artist rendered childlike by her love for people and our world."

Her work requires meticulous patience. One hundred photographs may produce a single "eureka" picture. She primes herself to make the effort an exceptional result. Four busy pools in Provincetown at motels (Eastside, Surfside, Cape Inn, and Provincetown Inn) are her locations. Guiding her camera immersed in the water, she attracts curious tourists during her photo shoots. In other towns' pools, Brody might be arrested for trespassing.

Brody first came to P'town at age eighteen with David Brody, whom she later married. When they

accessible in Provincetown, for encouraging her to learn new techniques and experiment with bold approaches. Her pictures suggest narratives, making her a storyteller with a camera.

Brody studied with Marian Roth, the town's best-known, innovative pinhole photographer. A magnificent teacher, Roth brings a year-rounders' vision to her work; her pinhole pictures reflect a wide range of moods, often a subtle color scheme. In comparison, Brody's color-filled photos are buoyant, enthusiastic renderings of only one season. "I am a summer person," Lora notes. "I make no apology for color in my work." Or, as



TWO MEN IN THE POOL, 2006, ARCHIVAL GICLÉE PRINT, 13 BY 19 INCHES

pulled into town from Providence, Lora strolled down Commercial Street and rhapsodized: "Everyone here is crazy. No one is telling me to calm down!"

Brody is the author of more than twenty cookbooks, an international cooking teacher, a blogger and memoirist. The variety of her cookbooks range from *The New England Table* to *Chocolate American Style*, my personal favorite. She embraces the "P'town economy" of neighborly sharing. Her dinner table on Thistlemore Road faces a high dune, and she often invites community friends for delightful meals made by a culinary professional.

Seeking an alternative means of self-expression, Brody took classes in street photography with Constantine Manos, Amy Arbus, Alex and Becky Webb. She praises these gifted teachers,

Mike Carroll puts it, Brody is "disarmingly honest, boldly reclaiming beauty as a necessary function for daily living."

From a teenager smitten by the liberal atmosphere to a honeymooner unaware of her own artistic abilities, to a middle-aged student seeking practice to make perfect, Brody has matured in this place. Today, this older and wiser grandmother recognizes finite time. "P'town makes me present to the precious glory in everything—summer, sun, and sand—a miracle. Provincetown is my emotional anchor, the place I am most awake."

DENISE DOHERTY PAPPAS is a summer resident who teaches writing to diplomats from the Middle East at the Fletcher School at Tufts University. She fell in love with her husband on Commercial Street.

An Interview with Mark Adams

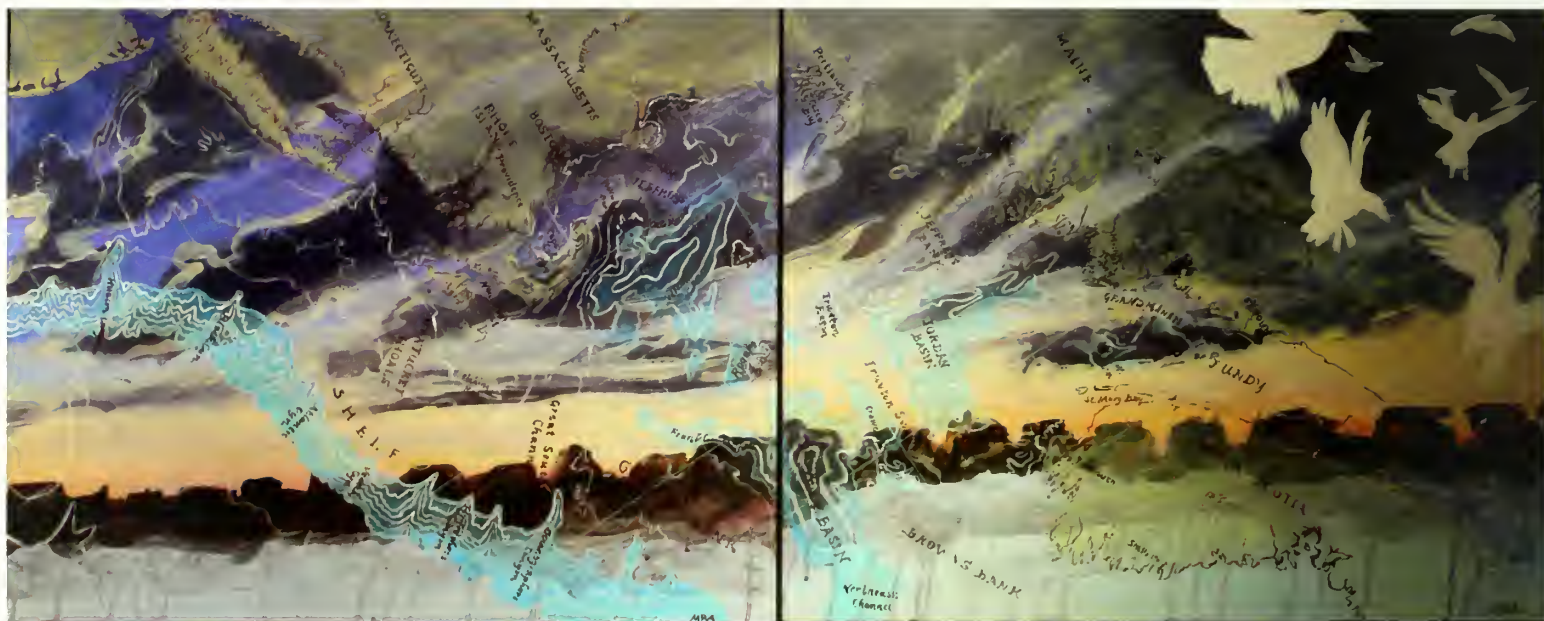
THE ART OF ACCUMULATION, PLACE AND TIME

BY SALVATORE SCIBONA

MARK ADAMS is a painter, printmaker, and cartographer with the National Park Service based on Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard since 1987. He has taught at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Castle Hill Center for the Arts, and the Provincetown School Academy program, and as a guest in the MFA program of the Fine Arts Work Center and Massachusetts College of Art. Adams exhibits regularly at the Schoolhouse Gallery where he has focused on works of art that use layered images of maps, personal notebook pages, text, data,

and images of animals and friends, in light accumulation on paper and wood panels; he is currently working on a series of paintings of figures on canvas that concern the almanac of time reminiscent, and the medieval book of hours. (His new work will be exhibited from August 27 to September 15 at the Schoolhouse Gallery in Provincetown.)

This conversation with Salvatore Scibona took place in Provincetown over the spring.



CONTINENTAL SHELF II, 2007, ACRYLIC AND MIXED MEDIA ON BIRCH PANEL, 24 BY 60 INCHES (PART OF CUSP CATASTROPHE THEORY, 8 BY 8 FOOT INSTALLATION)

SALVATORE SCIBONA: Your paintings seem to be composed of distinct layers, each of which illustrates a field of scientific expertise. It's as though scientists of diverse disciplines were all studying the same moment and assembling what they'd found into a single composition. The geologist sees the formation of a landscape, the cartographer sees the contour lines of its elevation, the zoologist sees a flock of birds. All these fields of information are true of this place at the same time, yet we typically see only what we have trained ourselves to see, and for me your work corrects that habit. Your pictures allow us a fuller, more multifarious way of seeing. Does this describe at all accurately what you're trying to do?

MARK ADAMS: As a painter I'm interested in what we can discover by observing nature without a lot of received knowledge. In 2008 I put together a show about being shipwrecked. The paintings represent how a person marooned might observe and collect things from scratch: a series of similar birds, the jawbone of a whale, totems, different kinds of maps—useful and memorable things. But I also included a series of images of people reduced

to exhaustion, stripped of things. I hoped to evoke the precarious feeling many people I know share while the world tips toward the next calamity.

Two other themes draw me in repeatedly: taxonomies and layers, the horizontal and the vertical. I get a particular satisfaction from organizing things into categories (our own bins being no more arbitrary than the established ones). Taxonomy is like sorting wing feathers by size and shape. You need another dimension to make them fly. By "layers" I mean adding those dimensions. Dimensions of space and time. The layers echo the mapping process, where spatial information is abstracted, reduced, and overlain to reveal coincidences of place and time. Geology and forest fires and gravity and metes and bounds—and history plowing it up—all go on at once like the threads of a story in which the characters don't know each other until the bomb goes off.

SS: What you describe seems analogous to indirect painting. A portraitist might build the complexion of a figure not by mixing a fleshy color on the palette and applying it to the canvas (direct painting); but by painting one color on a canvas, and another on

top of that, and a very different one on top of that. Each layer changes the previous one without obliterating it. The cumulative effect can be a depth in the color that makes the figure a superreal human presence. When I look at a Sargent painting, for example, I feel more in the presence of a *person* than I do with most flesh-and-blood people.

I wonder whether you think we *need* art to let us see in this superreal way; or whether it's possible to have that kind of experience firsthand, without a piece of art mediating things? Often the trained eye sees more of what it is trained to see but less of everything else. How much do we fail to see because of what we know?

MA: I'm not sure that painters are limited by what we know. I steal images from everywhere like a magpie and build them into the surface. They might represent geology or ecology in a superficial way, but viewers bring their own associations and, hopefully, certain lights go on that were already wired in their experience. Just as you construct a character and give him behaviors and a story, but we readers provide the flesh from our own lives. I'm constantly amazed at what people see and like

in the paintings—in a John Cage-y way I think they are “hearing” the room they just came from. But maybe I can make that room bigger by throwing out some new or unexpected vision.

I certainly couldn't be a painter if I didn't spend time with scientists. As you know, science makes leaps. A previously absurd notion can be codified in a way that explains and predicts other phenomena in the world. It doesn't even have to make sense yet, because, after all, we live in the world before we understand it. Graham Giese (the master of coastal geology from the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies) tells me about what it was like to be a geologist in the world before and after “continental drift” became the standard theory. An idea can be heresy until it explains a generation of observations and suddenly it's a lock.

I prefer to think that the arts become worthy when they provoke experiences in the “real” world. People at parties in New York sometimes call me—because of some painting of mine they've seen at the Schoolhouse—to resolve a question about how the tides work or how monarch butterflies

wants me around anyway. The father of the bride is not invited into the bridal bed.

I hope to write things that don't need me and don't exist to serve me. You don't read a book in order to make the author feel good. Denis Johnson condenses all this when one of his characters realizes “that what I first require of a work of art is that its agenda—is that the word I want?—not include me. I don't want its aims put in doubt by an attempt to appeal to me, by any awareness of me at all.”

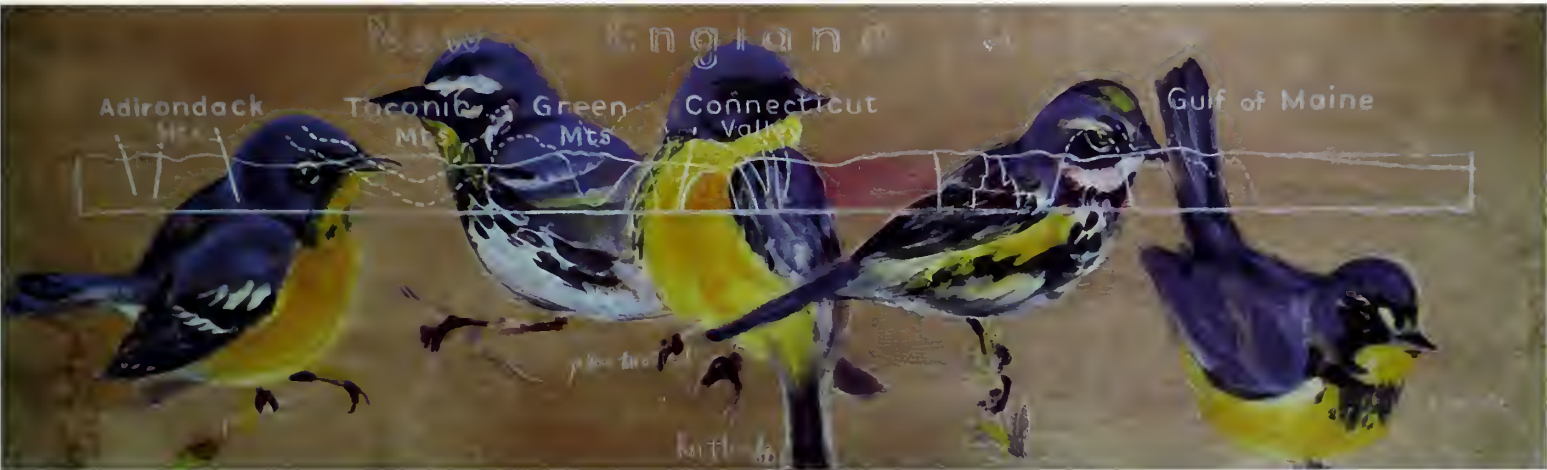
MA: You say that the things you write don't exist to serve you. My paintings have to serve me. At least I try to make them behave. Obey my rules, make my jokes funny, flatter my skills, make a point. Admittedly though, when they don't behave they can sometimes outshine me.

SS: You say, “I certainly couldn't be a painter if I didn't spend time with scientists.” It is rare and lucky the way sciences and artistry play together so convivially in your work. Too often knowledge

other paintings in the room and he has chosen to approach this one. You don't give them all equal attention. That would be charity. The painting has to give you a reason. But you don't just start reading the painting. The whole thing has to speak to you at once and make you want to pull up a chair and order a drink. Now you are dating.

The formal qualities speak first. These qualities are all visual. Do you know the Japanese rock gardens at Ryoan-ji? Just groupings of rocks floating among raked stones. There's a rightness to the composition, even if you don't know the rules. So the painting looks right and you engage it but your guard is still up. Much conceptual art has important ideas that you would never take home. You look for availability and authenticity. And finally, how big is the world in there?

If you are going to continue seeing each other, you need compatibility. Your relationship with a painting is personal. It's not worth your trouble unless you can connect. If you are experienced with paintings, you might not be drawn in by clichés. You could relentlessly pursue exquisite re-



NEW ENGLAND WARBLER GEOLOGY, 2008, ACRYLIC AND MIXED MEDIA ON HARDWOOD PANEL, 12 BY 30 INCHES (PART OF SHIPWRECKED INSTALLATION)

navigate. As an expert I'm small-time, but I feel great when I can make them ask the questions.

A question for you: we talked once about the layers of complexity you construct in writing, and for whom that complexity is intended. It's as if you are writing several versions at once, one for the close readers and maybe a plot-driven version for those who just want a ripping good yarn. Many painters love the Process and assume that by devising an arbitrary set of calisthenics, the result will be complex and meaningful. Writers have nowhere to hide. Everything must be there in the words. You said you grow the characters draft by draft until their gaps and incongruities get enmeshed. So what kind of expectations do you have for your readers, and where do you find your rewards? Is it worth it?

SS: I don't require anything special of readers other than the ability and willingness to read. Of course any writer delights to hear that he has readers. But I don't need readers in order to be myself. And yet a novel needs readers in order to be itself. An unread novel is only half alive. I want to leave the reader and the book alone to have their own relationship. Neither of them really

competes with art. A novelist has to inform himself deeply about a place in order to write about it; but if he presents the information as information it is lethal to the story. He turns into the guest at the dinner party dissertating about the ionosphere. A writer must have the grace to look up from the page and say, “Ah, I've bored you.” And bury what he knows.

In light of all that, I hope you might help me with something. I would like to learn how to look at a work of visual art. When I look at visual art, I often feel I'm making a category mistake. I try to read the art. I stand in front of it and study it, accumulating observations, trying to cobble together a coherent impression. I feel I must study before I can look. Which is silly. Whenever I really see a work of art—like your beautiful painting *Continental Shelf II*—I am caught by it, pinned-down. Study is irrelevant to the transport I feel. I am succeeding in spite of myself.

A man walks into a gallery. He approaches a painting. What does he do next?

MA: The man walks up to a painting. Already we're getting somewhere because usually there are

finements. Or you may become exhausted by the effort and find relief in humble virtues. The Japanese Zen painters brought Minimalism to decadent heights, reducing their paintings to a few faint strokes around pregnant space.

Now come back to what you see. Keep coming back to what you see. Philip Yenawine, in a talk at the Fine Arts Work Center some summers ago, convinced the audience to respond with equal reverence to the formal qualities of both a Renaissance altarpiece and a Mapplethorpe back-alley encounter. Yenawine continually challenged the audience's preliminary response. He compelled us to look at the picture. He kept on asking: “What do you see that makes you think so?”

SALVATORE SCIBONA's first book, *The End*, was a finalist for the National Book Award and winner of the Young Lions Fiction Award from the New York Public Library, and of the Norman Mailer Cape Cod Award for Exceptional Writing. German, Italian, and French translations of *The End* are forthcoming. He received a 2010 Guggenheim Fellowship and a 2009 Whiting Writers' Award. He administers the writing program at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

The Works of Ellen LeBow and Anna Poor

"MYTHS, STORIES, AND THE LIFE OF THINGS"

BY REVA BLAU

THIS SPRING, the works of Ellen LeBow and Anna Poor were shown together at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in a mid-career survey, "Myths, Stories, and the Life of Things," and the narratives generated were enough to reach out, grab you by your collar, and pull you down into their powerful current. At once lovely and disquieting, the work gives us a glimpse of Poor and LeBow in the process of fulfilling an ancient mission of art to transcend life and touch the miraculous.

"Isn't that what all of us want—that we are saved from the Jaws of Life before it crushes us?" LeBow explains, as she shows me one of her seven- to eight-foot-long white board panels, at the foot of which a male lion cradles a haloed boy in its colossal paws. Poor similarly feels that art orders chaos, which it must also back up against. If art objects in antiquity and the Middle Ages aimed at arousing ecstasy, creating tragic catharsis, and warding off evil, Poor and LeBow's work asks us to consider our essential selves in collective relief.

BORN IN NEW YORK CITY, ANNA POOR GREW UP AROUND ARTISTS.

Her grandfather was Henry Varnum Poor, a trail-blazing and versatile artist who was an oil painter and a fresco-mural painter, ceramicist, furniture designer, architect, author, and illustrator. In each field, he made a lasting mark. Along with Sidney Simon, he cofounded the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in Maine. Anna Poor's aunt, Anne Poor, the stepdaughter of Varnum Poor, was also a painter, known for creating landscapes and portraits distilled from their backgrounds, as well as paintings of both combat and evacuations of the wounded during World War II.

Poor teaches at the Art Institute of Boston during the winter. During the summer, she

lives in the dunes of Truro in a house built by her grandfather. She shows at artSTRAND, a Provincetown collective of artists who share ownership of the gallery. For the past several years, she has worked on unique, bronze relief panels whose inspiration goes all the way back to the famous paneled doors in gilded bronze of the Baptistery in Florence, a few steps from the Great Duomo. Like Lorenzo Ghiberti, who toiled for almost a half century on the many panels that grace the northern and eastern doors, Poor uses a technique developed in the Renaissance by Donatello. (Called *rilievo schiacciato*, this technique is named after Tuscan bread that is literally pounded flat.) By creating layers through chiseling and modeling, artists could suggest three-

dimensionality in material that was no thicker than a slim notebook.

The exhibition shows nine of Poor's low-relief unique bronze panels in which chiseling and modeling has created a remarkably textured push and pull of dimensionality. Many of them feature a young woman. She appears rescued in the talons of a flying bird, balancing precariously on a chair in a rushing river, or carried aloft by a protective swan. Like the scenes on the Baptistery doors, such as the journey of Joseph, Poor's narrative friezes in bronze tell of the miracles that pluck the woman from an apocalyptic fate.

In Poor's latest series, *Imaginary Artifacts, Fakes and Fragments*, she continues, as she writes, "to explore the power of an object." For many of her





exhibitions, Poor houses her sculptural pieces of various stones, minerals, bronze, silver, gold, and wax in reliquary glass boxes. These boxes, welded by Poor, function to question Poor's status as the sole creator, an act of magic that will come up again in LeBow's work.

In *Eye, Probably Stolen from Baghdad*, a round sphere of the eye in alabaster emerges from the roughly hewn stone on which it balances. Beneath it to one side, Poor has created a flat surface onto which she has drawn a tiny digestive tract. Into the polished alabaster sphere Poor has inlaid lapis lazuli, the semiprecious gem that artists of the Assyrian Empire used for their art, including stone relief carving, as well as cylinder seals and scarabs. Lapis lazuli is an exquisite ultramarine blue. Cleopatra, and other fancy ladies in antiquity, used it in powdered form as eye shadow.

The Assyrian Empire arose from the Babylonian civilization in Mesopotamia. Between the ninth century and the fall of the empire in 610 BC it dominated not only the land in today's Iraq but

also large swaths between Turkey and Iran. It was the first great empire. Greece, Rome, and Britain would follow its example. While virtually nothing was known about Assyrian society for centuries, in the 1840s, British archeologist Austen Henry Layard uncovered miles of stone relief walls, figures, and objects that would paint a picture of splendid palaces in the ancient cities of Nimrud and Ninevah.

Most of the Assyrian artifacts and artwork was sent to the British Museum. Other pieces stayed in Mesopotamia and ended up at the Baghdad Museum, only to be looted during the Iraq War. Since some of the items from the palaces were in fact Phoenician pieces that were presumably looted in antiquity, Poor's *Eye* regards unblinkingly a stupendous diaspora.

Assyrian art attracts Poor for aesthetic and political reasons. No one can deny its magnificence. It provides stunning proof of Mesopotamia as "the cradle of civilization." Yet it also vibrates with its history as a nexus of conflict and bloodshed. While Greek art and literature offers a screen onto

which the West can project its own need for a secular intellectual ontology, objects from Assyria remind the West in a tactile way of the dispossession of culture by European Imperialism. Poor refers not only to the workmanship and beauty of these objects, but also to the madness of colonization that broils beneath.

THROUGHOUT HER CAREER AS AN ARTIST, ELLEN RAQUEL LEBOW

has culled images from fantastic sources in her travels and personal experiences. The show at PAAM showed work that has been made mostly in the last year. The twelve works—six horizontal and six vertical pieces—are quite radical departures from her previous work, but still reflect in a direct way LeBow's deep connection with Haiti.

The seven- and eight-foot-long panels maintain a familiar ratio corresponding to the scale of man. But LeBow enhances the work to superhero proportions. The scale—central to the new work



FACING PAGE: (TOP) ANNA POOR, *THREE HUMORS*, 2010, ALABASTER, 11 BY 14 BY 8 INCHES; (BOTTOM) ANNA POOR WITH THE INSTALLATION OF HER WORK AT THE PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM, SPRING 2010; THIS PAGE: (TOP) INSTALLATION VIEW OF ELLEN LEBOW'S WORK AT THE PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM (THE PANEL IN THE FOREGROUND WITH THE LION IS *REVELATION DELUGE*, 2008, CLAYBOARD AND INDIAN INK, 54 BY 30 INCHES); (BOTTOM) *EVERY BORDER CAN BE CROSSED*, 2008, CLAYBOARD AND INDIAN INK, 36 BY 98 INCHES

just as Poor's is central to hers—conjures the solemn funeral pyres stacked three deep in Westminster Abbey, the human-headed lions that flank an Assyrian palace, or the musculature of the Greek statues adorning the Acropolis.

Each panel depicts a whorl of feather-thin lines of white creating “cosmic clouds” on a pitch-black velvet surface. From these “clouds” pour icons, outcasts, saints, devils, angels, and beasts tumbling and roiling from different directions. The Virgin Mary (sometimes with Baby Jesus), along with dozens of female spiritual figures of the Bible, appear frequently. In one panel, we find Baron Samedi, the *loa* in Haitian voodoo standing for sex and death, who is often summoned when someone is close to dying. He is wearing a tuxedo and top hat as if dressed as a corpse ready for burial.

As in Renaissance fresco, parts of anatomy form shapes whose outline becomes something else. Shapes repeat in musical patterns. Often, these motifs form larger directional movements in the work. These movements are aesthetic but the repetition also suggests the universe in collective poses of self-surrender, devotion to the Spirit, and exaltation.

Little surprise but the religious here is as erotic as it is pious. In *Revelation Deluge*, the lion wraps its arm seductively and possessively on the boy's shoulder. And the boy cradled in the lion's giant paws suggests erotic surrender. The boy, with his Renaissance halo that rests on the ground, has the look of a sacred messenger.

LeBow began work on the white print block a decade ago while working on the bold illustrations

for Robert Finch's book *Special Places on Cape Cod and the Islands*. After the publication of the book, she started purchasing the board coated with kaolin clay for her own uses. Instead of making a print, she explored painting the clayboard black with Indian ink and then carving “with light” into it. She incises the panel with a blade, a process that is as irreversible as the cuts made by a surgeon. It is very difficult to hide any mistakes: this knife pares down drawing to its core. “With the knife,” she says, “I have total control.” This serves LeBow's unusual gifts as a draftsman.

Some years before discovering the technique, LeBow and Nauset Regional High School teacher Lisa Brown began a close relationship with the people of Matènwa, a small rural village in the mountains on the island of Lagonav. Inspired by her visits to a school that was started by friend Chris Low, LeBow began working with local artists making scarves that reflected their personal lives and stories. In 2002, LeBow and Brown founded the Starfish Arts & Vocational Center in Matènwa, where they also invited a few students from Nauset to join them. Education goes both ways. Women of the village paint silk scarves that are very popular and make sequined *drapos*, or ritual flags, which have a rich history in Haitian culture. These are sold in places such as RaRa, a small store begun by LeBow in Wellfleet center. The sales support the village and the continuity of the project. While art is at the center of the project, the Center joins the school in reforestation projects, vital to a once-fertile region losing its land to the sea.

In the Spring of 2007, LeBow was invited to participate in a show at the Cotuit Center for the Arts. It was given the title “Angry Sea,” a name that continues to fascinate LeBow. One work she exhibited was the fantastically ambitious project called *Deluge*. In Haitian, *lavalas* means “flood,” she explains, but it also became the political battle cry of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, former president of Haiti, suggesting that a flood of change could wipe out corruption. The word functioned as a catalyst for LeBow's work to evolve. “Once I turned the corner, I couldn't go back,” she says.

WHEN LEBOW AND POOR hung their show, they marveled on certain coincidences in their work. Separately, they had visited the exhibition “Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum” that showed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. They saw stone relief wall panels depicting lions, which were so sacred that they were often shown standing next to gods. While lions were symbols of protection, rulers and warriors hunted them, both in the wild and in the arena. A successful hunt reflected the prowess and sophistication of a particular monarchy. Throughout the artifacts found from the Assyrian Empire, the lion abounds.

In one particularly beautiful example in alabaster, a female lion bows its head at the foot of another lion in supplication. Another plaque found at Nimrud shows a lion with a boy's neck in its mouth. As it prepares to swallow the boy, the lion looks as if the act has suddenly slowed down. Carved from ivory, the ninth-century plaque is an exquisite example of carving from antiquity and is covered with gold leaf and inlaid with lapis lazuli. While being mauled by the lion, the boy throws his head back almost in erotic surrender, just as the haloed boy does in LeBow's *Revelation Deluge*. On an Assyrian stone relief called *The Dying Lion* (circa 645–640 BC), the lion does not fare as well. It portrays the death throes of a massive female lion wounded during a royal hunt. Here the maimed beast spews forth streams of blood from its mouth. LeBow uses this image in *Desire, Oh Desire, Come Again*. In her version, the lion, shot with arrows, vomits explosively an entire river. In the white caps, incongruously, bob Mickey Mouse figures.

In this brew of Disney and divinity broils an interesting truth about the worldview expressed by these artists. For both Poor and LeBow, good and evil, destiny and chance, paradise and hell, are not forces relegated to antiquity but are continually regurgitated in the floods of our time. The deluge becomes the apt metaphor for the tipping point at which the trappings of our ego or the fortification walls of our city yield to the gale force of whatever does not belong to us. In the works of Poor and LeBow, animal instinct and chaos confront reason and civilization in royal hunting arenas in which the winner is far from certain. By calling up specters of apocalypse, and bloody moments of truth from which we cannot turn back, Poor and LeBow offer us mortals the chance to feel the frisson of looking into the mouth of a lion.

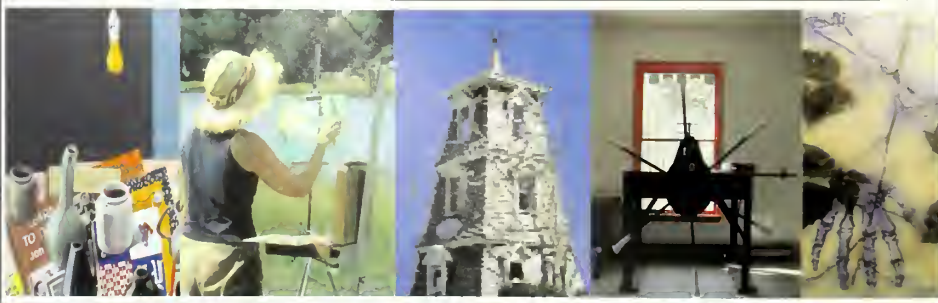
REVA BLAU is a freelance writer living in Wellfleet with her wonderful husband and son, whose boundless energy fills her with awe.

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Cinderella on Top of the News

art by MARYALICE JOHNSTON, text by JOANNE BARKAN

WHEN I FIRST SAW this piece, it didn't have a title although the silhouette figure had a name. Cinderella is one of a cast of female characters—Maryalice Johnston calls them “the girls”—whose silhouettes reappear, singly and in groups, in her current work.

I love the way this Cinderella is out in the real world, striding, confident but unselfconscious, purposeful and aware. For me, she is both literally and figuratively on top of the news. Hence the title of my text, which then became the title of the piece. —J.B.



No walled-off, shut-in damsel she.
No where's-my-prince-to-set-me-free.
She strides across the printed word,
on center fold and unchauffeured.
Mirror high, she's trained her eyes
to read between the lines and lies.
With one high heel, she tracks the news.
Who said she needed two glass shoes?
Cinderella rules.

CINDERELLA ON TOP OF THE NEWS, 2010, SILK-SCREEN ON NEWSPAPER PALETTE, 22 BY 12 INCHES
PHOTO BY JON R. FRIEDMAN

MARYALICE JOHNSTON is currently the Visual Arts Coordinator at the Fine Arts Work Center. She received an MFA in painting from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York, in 1982. Her recent series of silk-screen images can be seen at artSTRAND gallery in Provincetown.

JOANNE BARKAN writes occasionally about art that she loves. Otherwise she writes essays on politics and economics for adults as well as fiction, nonfiction, and verse for young readers. She lives in Manhattan and Truro.

Saudade

Photography by MISCHA RICHTER, Poem by NICK FLYNN



*beam, stem, keel, oar—this boat, this broken
boat, this beach*

littered with broken boats—broken

*beam broken stem broken keel broken oar
this head littered with broken eyes this mouth*

*littered with broken teeth
rot stench mold stench tooth stench*

gone. I

*pass a woman on the street, we slept together
once, a night too stormy to row*

*back out—now the tower will always tower
above us, now we see it*

*from wherever, it gives the impression
we will never get lost*

~

*sand on the deck, salt on your neck—between
inside & outside here there*

*never was
much difference. Some mornings*

the fog, a red plastic

*bucket, only that telephone pole
to pull us along. Mollie's house-*

*boat broke loose last night, bumped
the shore*

*(mine needs paint). The tide
will be a foot lower tomorrow, a foot*

*lower the day after that &
so on until the new*

*moon, when it will all tilt, spill, pour, flood
(flood tide) back. We cannot*

not think of it. Say this:

*People, always, in each lit room, say
I'd see them, nights I didn't*

(couldn't) make it to shore



*MISCHA RICHTER is a photographer living and working
in London, England, and Provincetown, Massachusetts.
He lived most of his childhood in Provincetown. His exhibi-
tion "Saudade" will be opening at the Provincetown Art
Association and Museum on August 27, 2010. A book of
his photographs and Nick Flynn's poems will be available
with all the proceeds going to benefit PAAM, WOMR,
HOW, and the Provincetown Soup Kitchen.*

~

Oysters. A pool table in the basement—whatever
drops overboard, whatever you

bury, whatever is

abandoned, rises up, washes
up, will all, eventually, be

salvage. Ashore, glance up
to the tops of the trees—see how their leaves

move. I'd meant to put her back in the next spring,
but something

happened. Gulls sometimes (sometimes
just a drawing of a gull),

the sky still blue, cover
the high school field, thousands of

them—all of them, seemingly—a sign, the coming
storm

~

*there is a boat which is no more
a boat, beside a house*

*which is no more a house, in a town which is no
more a town—we no longer*

say hello, no longer seem to even see
each other. I wonder now

whether we'd ever been together
at all

~

The leaf dropped from the branch

The seed rolled onto the deck
The seedling pushed into the caulking

The sapling split the plank
The tree lifts her into the fog—*beam, stem, keel, oar—*

this boat, this broken boat, this beach
littered with broken boats—*We have come back*

*from Jerusalem where we found
not what we sought.*



NICK FLYNN is the author of two memoirs, *The Tick-
ing Is the Bomb* (2010) and *Another Bullshit
Night in Suck City* (2004), as well as two books of
poetry. "Saudade" borrows some lines and inspiration
from Jung's *Red Book* and Frost's poem "Directive." For
many years he lived on a boat in Provincetown Harbor,
but he now lives in Brooklyn, with Lili Taylor and their
daughter, Maeve.

Tower of Babel

Paintings by LARRY COLLINS, Poetry by DAVID CARRINO

KILEY COURT 2

Here are the flowers at night. The paintbrush
is at ease in the territory of blindness—the plant greens,
glass greens, poison greens collide.

The composition floats lacquered, hot to the touch.
As the space heater glows steady with your own breath,
the Japanese Maple is unable to sit still between poses.

In a deliberate fugue state, the painting creeps
dangerously to the thin lip of decoration—
talking ragtime, the colors are delirious with

fever: pink violet. Hallucinating a trellis
entwined in Morning Glory, inventing thorns the roses wore,
you gave yourself communion on the moon's surface,

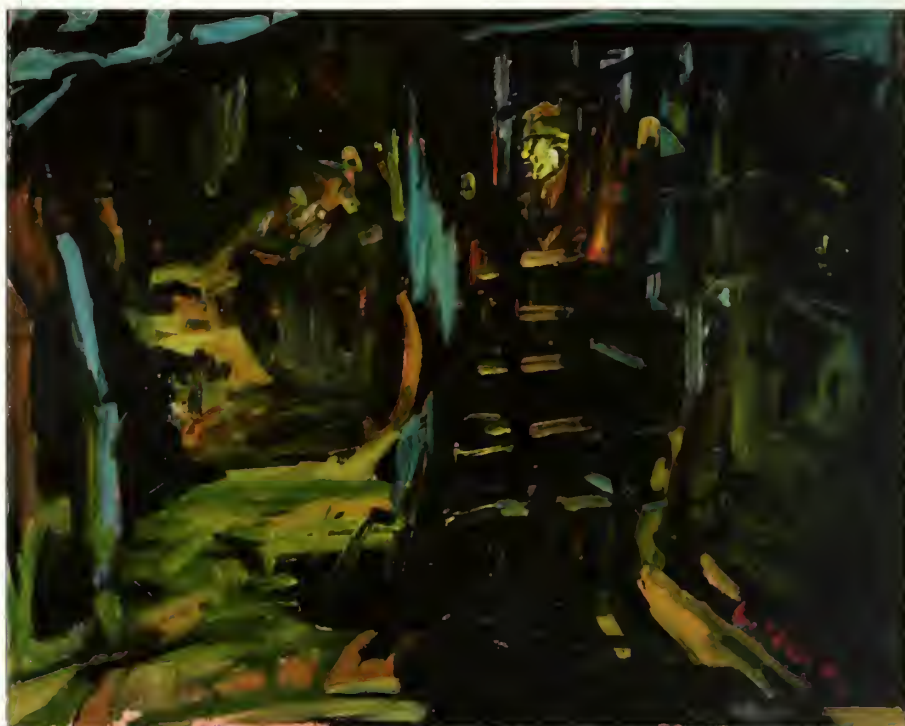
then in the courtyard, in the garden, gardens all over town.
Your studio is a shallow stage
with a ground of grass and a curtain of leaves

that hang from ribbons in the sky.
Though the audience of owls, bats, mice whistle and stamp
to show their approval, hold out their hands in support,

there is always some cliff
to tumble over or dangerous waters,
and you're on your own to stay alive.

I watched you paint in the cold with your unsteady
easel, banquette diamonds, cabochon emeralds scooped
up and smeared across the platinum canvas of lawn.

You were so sick that winter. At Bartley's Burger
in Cambridge all you could order was clear soup.



BABY DOLL

We are not here to debate the existence of monsters;
that's a given. Black-legged, blue-armed, perfumed and
chandelered; the walls of her room are the color of ether.

She's noticeable; tear-drenched, slobbered over, burnished with the patina
of spankings, hysterical tantrums. A love object
used up, disregarded—pick her out in any junk shop,

stoop sale, balding, demented. You learned to breathe life into the dead by
painting her. In the dark she gripped your hand so cigarettes, Valium, Bombay
martinis wouldn't keep you apart. Her shadow

reveals your face staring out from 1982. Your Chelsea landlord had the same
champagne-colored hair. Old time talk radio blared in the studio—The Bargain
Lady, The Vitamin Man, Arlene Francis, became

the doll's voice. Students from the Electrician's School blocked the sidewalk,
they wouldn't move aside when you walked your dog, a brown Akita, your
baby who you raised from a pup, who became aggressive to

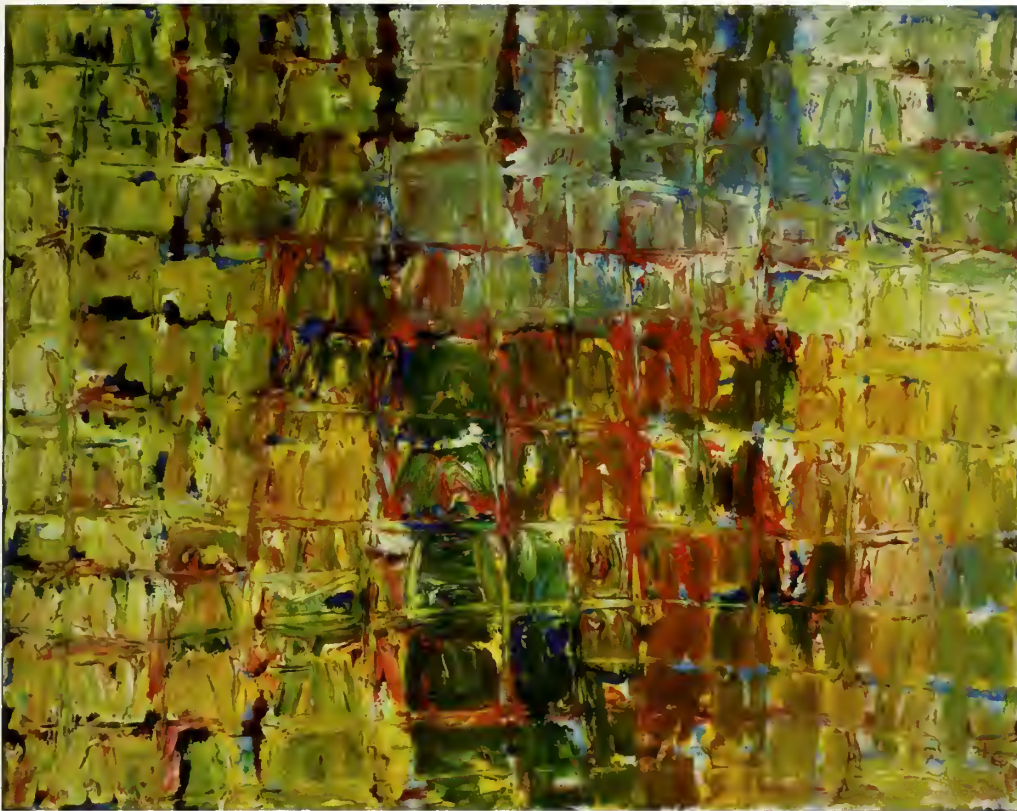
other men, started to bite. You had to give him away to a night watchman in
Maine. Baby Doll barks with her expertly modeled mouth. One day the leather
daddy in the basement apartment next door sent his young slave

at lunch hour to sit on the street. He slouched against a building, face in his
hands, the crotch of his jeans torn out, leaving him completely exposed. The
electricians threw rocks at him, but he didn't move.

Times Square is unrecognizable, smells like cinnamon now.
Spring's arrival in Manhattan, raunchy, raw, fresh—it's coming back
to me, Baby Doll's refusal to be despairing, meek, tasteful.
Bring back the filth.

The dirty snowman I photographed in Union Square had lost his whole face
and I didn't take it personally—but when I hug you and I'm reminded to be
careful, "You know I have a steel pin in my neck." I squeeze harder.





TOWER OF BABEL

Frightened boys are good boys. Adults will terrorize them into acting good, but eventually they lock themselves in the bathroom and turn bad. In Del City where almost everything is a sin, you drew your naked torso in the mirror with a crayon, leaning against the sink, ditched the scrapbooks you had made of Tuesday Weld, Jane Russell, Virginia Mayo. In the present tense you thrive, when you revert to the past you are spellbound, panicked, unable to read or speak aloud. They put you in The Dumb Class with the pregnant girls, the delinquents, the disfigured. You had a key but never told anyone, Mr. Hoke gave it to you. Why go home? There's no room left under the bed to hide—every closet and drawer is stuffed with winter coats, prom dresses, junk the neighbors gave your mother, she threw nothing away. Everyone needs a Mr. Hoke. You imagined your abstractions as a secret code. You were sending out messages through your paintings.

Oh I love that! people might say, never knowing what was in the code. It made you feel calm. You won every art award. The University recruited you like a football player. You were on TV.

You told the TV audience you were an Expressionist. Tower of Babel, painted in the garage on the concrete floor. You were in a rush, it was cold. Unintelligible, but you didn't care—I painted what I wanted.

I never liked the title. Your stepfather wore a jump suit and would ask you if you ever felt like you were looking down and watching yourself. *I said no, and that was all I said.*

Years later he took over the garage with second-hand lawnmowers and got grease all over the floor.

The Provincetown Art Association and Museum will present a solo exhibition featuring the work of artist LARRY COLLINS to be on view August 27 through October 10, 2010. The exhibition will open with a reception on Friday, August 27, at 8 p.m. PAAM will also offer an informative public lecture with the artist on Tuesday, September 14, at 7 p.m. as part of its Fredi Schiff Levin Lecture Series.

Former Provincetown resident DAVID CARRINO is an artist and writer living and working in New York.

FACING PAGE: (TOP) KILEY COURT 2, 2000, OIL ON CANVAS, 16 BY 20 INCHES; (BOTTOM) BABY DOLL, 1982, OIL ON CANVAS, 30 BY 24 INCHES

ABOVE: TOWER OF BABEL, 1962, OIL ON CANVAS, 22 BY 28 INCHES

PHOTOS BY JAMES ZIMMERMAN

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THE COLOR, ALCHEMY, AND CORUSCATION OF Jeffrey Colbert

BY JEFFREY BRODRICK

RATHER LATE ONE BALMY SUMMER night, the artist Jeffrey Colbert was driving down Cape toward Race Point and his then-girlfriend waiting in a dune shack, his truck full of canvases, including most of his recent gig in Napa; motoring toward his destination, a perhaps ill-advised lane change led him into the clutches of the avuncular yet crafty Officer Savin, and thence to Orleans District Court and the good hands of public defender Jeffrey Brodrick, yours truly.

Subject apprehended: one Jeffrey Colbert, artist, "just finishing up some commissions for a millionaire who owned a big vineyard in Napa." I add, "His father was a big-time artist, too; he was the art director for the Marlboro Man ad campaign." Load up the iconography. A rugged cowboy, a grand vista, life on the frontier when longhorns grazed the prairies of the West. A 1981 graduate of the University of Iowa with a degree in painting and fine arts, Colbert studied under Ben Moss and later taught with him at Dartmouth College; he also taught at the Chautauqua Institution.

"His painting is on a wine label for a wine once poured in the White House," I hear myself saying gravely to Judge Welsh in court several weeks later. As though this was a matter of some import—say national security; as though if the case went awry there was some potentiality that imperiled the future of art in America—and the judge certainly wasn't going to let that happen.

"One day, let's hope we'll have a White House that pours wine again," said Judge Welsh, and I knew, we were in.

Colbert and I floated out of the courtroom on a wave of good will and charm, like particles in one of his paintings, vibrantly charged, full of energy and hope. "Too bad," I think. "If the judge had seen the painting he would have found his judgment affirmed."

Calistoga Hillside (2002) depicts two gnarled and skeletal oak trees against a wan, cold-yellow sky. The trees are leafless. It is winter. The calligraphic patterns in the hillside—a graceful mosaic of green, purple, salmon, and mauve—foster leaping ascenders in the fume-like tops of trees, which smolder, rebuff, and evoke frontier alertness and alarm.

"It was as if the place were smoking," Colbert said, "because it wasn't green yet. It was all just skeletal. I had just arrived in Napa and I parked on a hairpin turn and hiked down a ravine and crossed a stream. I was really creeped out. I had a very unscientific feeling that something is not cool with this place. I came back twice. I was like 'Okay, you did your best, now get the hell out of here—I'm not coming back.'"



SELF-PORTRAIT, 1995. OIL ON CANVAS, 18 BY 14 INCHES

In *Self-Portrait* (1995) we see the artist and his coruscating red hair, fraught olive eyes, almost aghast at his own power of observation. The hair color is vermillion, and every hue of calendula. "I made that paint myself," he said. "Get some good cold-pressed linseed oil, some really good pigment, which of course is just a powder particulate. Get a good piece of glass, grind it with Carborundum with a pestle and get a good upper-body workout." Making his own paints and concocting his own colors allows him to prepare his palette not just for the season, but for that sudden change in the weather, and capture that haunting, spectral sky.

I spoke recently with Jeffrey's father, Bill Colbert, who retired from the Leo Burnett Agency. "Ideas were my strong suit," he said. "I worked on the Marlboro account for twenty-five years as art director and then creative director."

"I was able to produce visuals, graphic visuals that reflected boyhood dreams of being a mid-westerner and being out West, and all the cowboy movies I saw as a kid I got to relive as an adult. We'd go out and do a five-day scout. If we decided we wanted to shoot in Jackson Hole, we'd go out there. In the old days, we found a good corral, a river or a lake, and beautiful vistas and mountain ranges. We'd go out and actually all the cowboys were real cowboys. We were idolized because we were the Marlboro Man."

Jeffrey Colbert remembers driving around as a child in the winter in Iowa with his father, scouting out landscapes. "He was always stopping in the landscape with me, taking those old Polaroid pictures, old sentimental things, like mills and barns, which were plentiful in Iowa. We'd look at the pictures in the car and it was always very cold. I'd ask him, 'Why do we always do this when it's cold, man?' He liked the light—it was really stark. When it's clear and fifteen degrees, it's clean. It's got elegance."

JEFFREY BRODRICK works as a criminal defense attorney on the Lower Cape. He claims to be working on a thriller.

Marian Roth A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP TO PLACE

BY SUSAN RAND BROWN

“CANCER IS A TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE YOUR face pressed right up against the glass of your own mortality.” So spoke Jason Shinder, poet and Outer Cape habitué, whose passing in 2008 was noted in the “Lives” section of the *New York Times*. Marian Roth, maker of iconic black-and-white images of Provincetown owing their dream-like perspectives to pinhole cameras of her own invention, wrestled in 2004 with intimations of mortality not unlike Shinder’s. Staring down the fire-breathing beast, she emerged ready to re-embrace, through the glass of a different medium, this spit of sand, which has given her identity and community.

Today Marian Roth describes herself, trademark self-deprecating humor in high gear, as a reformed left-brained intellectual. It took two decades plus for her to move from novice with a 35 millimeter, learning while doing commercial gigs, to assured master of pinhole photography, a specialty whose legitimacy she helped establish (a pinhole is a camera without a lens, so it cannot be focused; it is called lens-less photography, and its results, at least for a beginner, are in large measure unpredictable). Roth was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2000 for photography; a sign, as she sees it, of having entered the larger “conversation” about contemporary photographic image-making.

A studio visit in the late summer of 2009 found her sorting photographic images and packing up her darkroom as she bravely, joyfully, feels her way for the second time—outsider artist as a painter, insider within the arts community (currently she serves as Secretary of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum Board of Directors), drawing people wherever she goes, those she has mentored and those who have mentored her.

While she has taken classes in Provincetown, studying at PAAM with painter-mentor Robert Henry (“he taught me how to look at a painting and how to trust my own vision,” she says), Jim Peters (“it was like a love affair with painting in his class”), and printmaker Vicky Tomayko (“really stimulating to work with, and a brilliant printmaker”) Roth never attended a formal art school. Rules of perspective continue to make her nervous, she insists: too analytical for this free spirit who tossed off her inner censor for a muse who demands spontaneity. As a photographer, she last showed at the Schoolhouse Gallery in the East End of Commercial Street. When she started a new identity as a painter, she joined the Kobalt Gallery, a little further west, and is now in her fourth season there. (Roth will have a solo show at Kobalt in late July.)

Roth’s paintings are dreamscapes, reinventions in soft, peaceful colors (blue is a favorite) of shapes familiar in her real world. Her intimate subjects—women finding a path alone or together,



JOURNEY #5, 2010, OIL ON GESSOBORD, 10 BY 10 INCHES

often on an empty beach; the domesticated bay or the mysterious back shore, where she spends as much time as possible; or cottages, clustered and alone—tell stories personal to her, and universal in their appeal.

These wandering or standing figures, often minuscule in relation to an enormous, silent sky, are poet-explorers, dreaming in metaphor. They open themselves to an uncharted darkness Van Gogh would recognize, points of light (“stars”) as touchstones. Her women exist for themselves: there is no posing, no winking awareness of a fourth wall. Often they have their backs to us. They could be Roth herself, separating, reconnecting, filled with awe.

As we move into her painting studio, Roth speaks of her work with such lucidity that her comments often stretch into monologues, or reveries, which eloquently describe her experiences, and her feelings about life and work and healing. We begin in what has been her inner sanctum, the photography darkroom, just as she was digging in to the labors of sorting, packing, and cleaning. Archival boxes hold sorted images whose titles describe Roth’s recurrent subjects, fixations as profoundly elegant as French photographer Eugène Atget’s: cottages, landscapes, the dunes.

Her goal at this moment is to prepare for a

large-scale showing of photographic work. “It may sound really crass, but it would be nice to have this work shown, to have it out into the world. I don’t need to own these things any longer. But I want the wider world to recognize its value,” she says.

Then too, Roth needs to claim a foothold for a new medium by affecting what a nearby innkeeper would call a change-over: farewell boxes of pinhole cameras and photosensitive papers sloshing around in chemicals, hello printmaking area and sink to clean rollers, brushes, and inks.

She continues, introducing the last series of pinholes. “That winter when the cancer was first diagnosed (late 2003), and then the next year when I was going through chemo, I didn’t do much work. But the summer after, I started on three-hole pinholes. These were the last pinholes, the final series.”

Beech Forest, the back shore: Roth shared footsteps with generations of poets and walkers seeking inspiration in this primal dune scattered with black pine. But the resolution—three scoops of light emerging from a core of darkness—was Roth’s own way of bearing witness. She showed these pieces, Rothko-like in intensity and truth-telling, in 2005. It was her last show as a photographer.

“In the late ’90s I won a residency to the National Seashore C-Scape Dune Shack,” Marian



A MEDITATION ON LOVE AND TIME #1 AND #2, 2010, OIL ON GESSOBORD, EACH PANEL 36 BY 24 INCHES

explains, “with the proposal of turning the dune shack into a pinhole camera. It took me the whole three weeks to make a few pictures—it was like taming a wild beast. The shack was thrilling. When the residency ended I decided that I wanted to keep making really large images, but I needed to be able to move around and not be confined to the view out a stationary window. I bought a used van from Irene Lipton and Phil Smith and spent months figuring out how to turn it into a camera. I think the van was the highlight of my pinhole work—I loved being able to drive around and find a compelling place and then sit inside as I made the image. It was completely magical. I think this is the work that got me the Guggenheim in 2000. And then I had a big

solo show in New York that was reviewed in the *New Yorker* and short-listed in the *New York Times* for four weeks. I felt that I had fulfilled all my dreams.

“Then, in the year or two before the cancer, I became aware of a yearning for a new direction, new challenges. I started to know how everything about my pinhole cameras was going to turn out, and that was an unsettling feeling. I am always pushed by the unknowns—it is the process of making and solving problems that excites me. ‘What if a dune shack could take a picture? How can I make a really big camera that moves?’ Changing to painting wasn’t about saying ‘no’ to photography, it was about saying ‘yes’ to a new way to solve problems, filled with challenges and unknowns. Everything became ‘how?’ I was awake again.”

We move into her painting studio, talking about her life as a politically aware college professor and then as a photographer, arriving in Provincetown. It took only a few turns of the calendar for this Provincetown washashore to become a year-rounder.

After a Brooklyn girlhood (Coney Island) and a coming-of-age at Brooklyn College, then grad school in Iowa, she emerged in 1968 “right in the middle of everything,” a newly minted Political Science PhD. Syracuse University hired her, and Roth became, “almost overnight” is how she describes it, a leader of the

nascent women’s movement there. The teaching gig was short-lived: by 1972, “a really popular teacher, teaching the politics of women, the politics of youth,” she was fired.

Roth recalls that time vividly. “I couldn’t believe that I was being paid less than men without PhD’s! It made me really angry, and soon I became a ‘troublemaker.’ There were no laws against discrimination then. Years later, the National Organization for Women sued Syracuse in a class action suit on behalf of all women, past, present, and future: I was the only one who signed it. There was a settlement, to have women’s studies. I loved the whole adventure of that time, and am very proud of what I did.”

Roth had been coming to Provincetown in the 1970s for short stints: “when Arnie Manos had the Rainbow Shop, and Joy McNulty owned the Clambake, the sole woman-owned restaurant in town.” Then in 1982, at age thirty-six, she returned with other politically active writers, artists, and friends, including poets Olga Broumas and Rita Speicher, to open “Freehand,” a small alternative art program. Melanie Braverman, poet and longtime town resident, was in the first group of students. Roth also taught a community photography class, where she met Mary DeAngelis, now a clothing designer and co-owner of Mary DeAngelis/Silk & Feathers on Commercial Street, who became Roth’s life-partner.

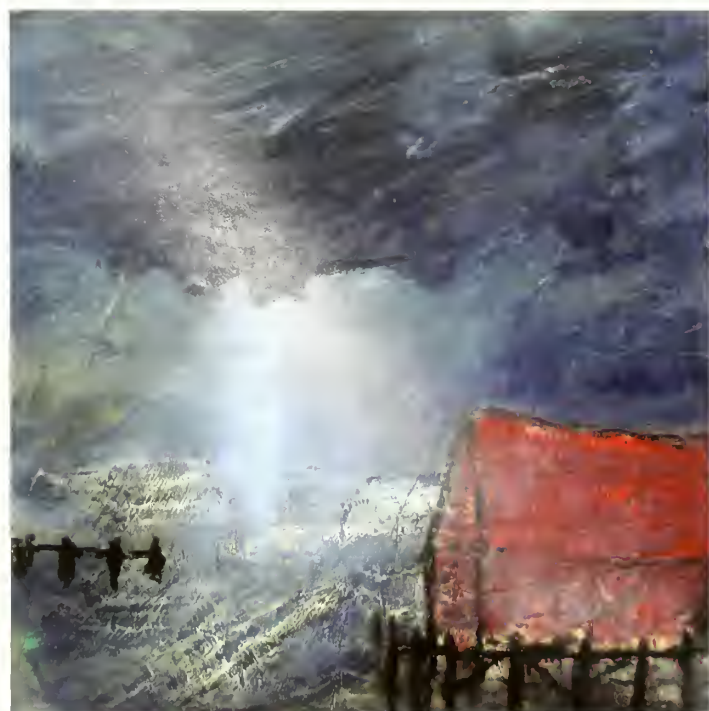
Before long, Roth and DeAngelis found housing in the West End, with the understanding that they’d care for the plumbing during the frozen months and move out come summer. She carved out studio space to accept assignments for “commercial work,” catalogs and weddings. She was the photo editor of *Provincetown Magazine* and for years took all the covers. Then she began a series titled “The Working Women of Provincetown,” shown in the Provincetown Historical Museum (now the town library) and published as a ten-page portfolio in *Provincetown Arts*.

“I would walk around town,” Roth recalls, “and say to someone ‘Can I take your picture?’ They’d come to the house . . . window washers, hairdressers, mechanics. The photos were a clean black-and-white against a white background, which was very stylish at the time. They had a grandness to them. I wanted to turn my subjects into icons.”

After a while the commercial work felt restraining. Looking for a way to improvise photographic images, she did a series of underwater pieces, using a waterproof camera. She would go with friends to the jetty in the West End of town. Everyone would take off their clothes and jump into the water; Roth would start snapping.

“It was the mystery of the process,” she explains. “I could just point the camera. And the pictures were incredible! With pinhole, I was able to build on this sense of mystery. Pinhole is like closing your eyes, which I had to do, because underwater I could not see. I realized that if I just stopped looking, forming anything in my brain, I would be letting it come through me. There had been too much control. I was losing my way . . . getting in my own way. So pinhole was perfect, because you can’t see what you’re doing.

“My photographs were always looking for this



PROVINCETOWN STORIES #3, 2010, OIL ON GESSOBORD, 12 BY 12 INCHES

closeness to Provincetown. I wanted it to have this atmosphere that would draw me in. And then I could be here. I just wanted to express my relationship to the place."

For "A Gathering Thread: The Photography of Place," a 1995 group exhibition at PAAM, Roth wrote: "I came to Provincetown . . . to begin life as an artist. I have never regretted that decision. Provincetown has been the place where I have come into myself, where I have made roots, and where I make pictures. . . . I perceive the town, the light, the people, the community, as a constant in my life, supporting and inspiring me." This sensitivity, this need to express herself as an artist in this specific place, is the constant connecting her work in one medium to another.

"I feel that my painting is also grounded in 'place,'" Roth says. "So nothing has really changed. This place is also a key to an imaginary place that I can go to. For example, the beach: a painting may be about the actual beach, but it is also about an imaginary place—where it takes me."

Roth's expression has become relaxed and dreamy. She sits on a painter's stool, twirling her hands, moving her fingers through loose gray hair that, like Roth herself, clearly goes in its own direction. We continue talking about what painting means to her; what to look for in her paintings that are abstract yet personal, specific to her own geographic sense of self. The woman is the painter who is finding her way, taking baby steps: "I'm relearning how to be me as an artist in this place. You might see a painting where the dunes [a favorite subject] have a path. I make these figures—these little things in a big world—and place them on this path. It is the place where Marian sets out on her path. Marian is beginning a new path, Marian is following her own path. The imagery comes as I release myself from having to be 'realistic,' or believing my figures have to be realistic."

We pull out a few recently completed canvases. In style and subject matter, there is a quality of innocence to this work. A woman lies on the beach, or walks in the snow. A woman sits and dreams, or lies in the dark, under the stars. It reads like a yoga breath, a slowing down. This straightforward approach to subject might be thought unfashionable, Roth interjects, given the postmodern predilection for art that has itself as a subject: "Because I never went to school to learn how to make art, my painting is not about painting. I have nothing to say about painting, except that I love it." This last comment is followed by a belly laugh, one of many during our afternoon together. "There is a certain kind of trap I had to get out of: that being acknowledged or rewarded for one thing meant I couldn't move to another."

I mention having been very moved by an encounter between Roth and painter Selina Trieff. The women know each other well. It was a late August evening, the closing week of Trieff's solo exhibition at PAAM: although very different in style and scale, Trieff's subject, like Roth's, is women who seem to inhabit a very personal space. Trieff was leading a large group through her show, moving from one part of the crowded gallery to another, responding to questions. Coming close so as to be heard, Roth asked a question revealing her own evolution

as an artist. Even though the room was packed, her openness and Trieff's response created such an intimate moment, two painters talking shop.

Roth recalls the moment with a smile. "Selina had a painting with two moons in it. I wanted to know how she could find the courage to do that, or if she even thought about that. As a photographer I worked with the physical world as subject. While pinhole took me away from that in many ways, I struggle with releasing myself from a certain kind of literalness. After all these years I am back to a place of not knowing how.

"I have always been a little grateful for not having gone to art school, because when you don't know the rules it is a lot easier to break them. After going to graduate school in Political Science the last thing I ever wanted to do was to go back to school. It is really freeing and very satisfying to teach myself. But the downside is that you have to come to your own definition of yourself as an artist. When you graduate from art school you are an artist. You have the degree. But when you teach yourself you are always wondering—am I this yet?"

I interject, noting that she's spent a quarter-century looking at the art in Provincetown, and Roth responds reflectively: "I've long thought that it's the art in Provincetown that created the idea of Provincetown. People have in their head what Provincetown looks like, what it feels like: think of Ross Moffett's paintings! There are people who created a visual dream of Provincetown. This is the world I live in: the world of little houses and crooked streets. Provincetown artists have created an actual *atmosphere* [she stretches out this word, savoring its syllables] around us. That's why I love it here.

"There can be a certain negativity, that those who continue to build on this atmosphere are somehow not sophisticated as artists. I've encountered an attitude that if ordinary people like your work, and buy it, especially if it has Provincetown as a subject, then it must be 'lesser,' or rather, not 'real art.'" She pauses as she laughs again. "To say that your work is accessible is a put-down. To me, being accessible means that I am able to communicate a feeling that comes from inside me. There is something very deep in my soul that is ignited, that comes alive [when I paint].

"As a painter, I am interested in exploring this person inside of me—I feel able to come out in the world like this! It's taken me a long time to be able to express some kind of genuineness about my own self, that doesn't involve what anybody else thinks of me. This is where I want to go. This is my inner life. If other people look at it and say, that's how Provincetown, or reality, feels like to me, that's fine."

I pose one last question: "Marian, are you still on a journey?"

"Everyone is still on a journey," she replies. "Where I am now, is exploring my own imagery. I feel like I've just opened up a new door, for my own language. My paintings are a new stage for my little stories. I feel at ease, not having to be the most intellectual person in the room.

"Someone said my work is metaphysical. Yes—these paintings are statements about reality. I am talking about life, about walking through. This is

a combination of getting older, and having had cancer. To think that I lived . . . I decided to take control of my life, in the sense of realizing, this body, this Marian, has to be true to herself. This body is me. It is my little world. Life is about walking through a lot of rocks, and fires. You come out and keep walking."

SUSAN RAND BROWN profiled the painter Lillian Orlowsky for the 2004/05 issue of Provincetown Arts, and has since interviewed artists Ellen LeBow, Barbara E. Cohen, Mike Wright, and Sky Power. A native New Yorker teaching literature in Connecticut, Brown began writing about the arts in the 1970s, and has profiled many of the Outer Cape's major artists for the Provincetown Banner. She has spent summers in her family's Commercial Street home for over four decades.

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Cape Personalities

TRURO ARTIST NANCY ELLEN CRAIG

BY TAYLOR M. POLITES

NANCY ELLEN CRAIG COMPARES HERSELF TO A PHOENIX RISING from the ashes, although the diminutive Craig in no way conjures the image of the mythical bird of flame. Barely five feet tall, she moves with sprite-like exuberance. Eighty-three this year, she has no problem hauling her super-sized canvases across a room or pounding pork cutlets with finesse. When she sits, she often pulls her legs underneath herself without a grimace like a yogi. Her green eyes sparkle and her impish mouth easily laughs. There is nothing of the fierceness of a phoenix about her. Her posture possesses alert composure. Her phoenix is born from the flames of destruction.

Craig's Truro home on Town Hall Hill was gutted by fire in March of 2008, only seven months after the death of her husband of forty-five years. The double tragedy was reported in the *Provincetown Banner*, the *Cape Cod Times*, and the *Boston Globe*. But as she sits in her newly rebuilt home equipped with an expansive studio, she exudes an infectious optimism about the coming season of exhibits of her work: a solo show at the Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill as well as a spot on their studio tour this August; a show of her drawings at the Gail Browne Gallery in Provincetown; an exhibition at the Truro Council on Aging. In November 2011 at the Cape Cod Museum of Art, a major solo show of large canvases is scheduled. This new wealth of exposure is a far cry from the isolation and quiet of recent years that enabled her to focus and produce a staggering amount of work.

Looking around her new home, it appears that the museum has come to her. The walls are lined with Craig's innumerable portraits, landscapes, and still lifes. There are massive canvases



NANCY CRAIG HOLDING *THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT*, 2005, OIL ON CANVAS, 103 BY 139 INCHES. THE WORK INCLUDES A SELF-PORTRAIT AND PORTRAITS OF HER HUSBAND, PRESTON CARTER, AND ONE OF HER SONS. PHOTOS BY JAMIE CASERTANO

of eight-feet-by-ten and larger depicting scenes of the Crucifixion, the Sermon on the Mount, ritual sacrifices, and mythical heroes; paintings of muscular nudes on rearing horses against fields of red or blue; animal portraits, a cheetah on a blue background so dark it is almost black; the twin towers spouting smoke that becomes Apollo in his chariot led by four wild horses; a chilling depiction of the prisoners of Abu Ghraib, piled naked bodies surrounded by a darkened art class; wild dogs tearing a man apart; enormous seashells so real you can feel the mother-of-pearl. And dozens of those portraits that built her early career.

She works quickly in a way that suggests no barriers between her subconscious and her

conscious. Ideas flow from her mind to her hand, whether she works on paper or canvas. "Out of things not impossible, choose always the most difficult. That's Yeats's and my motto," she says.

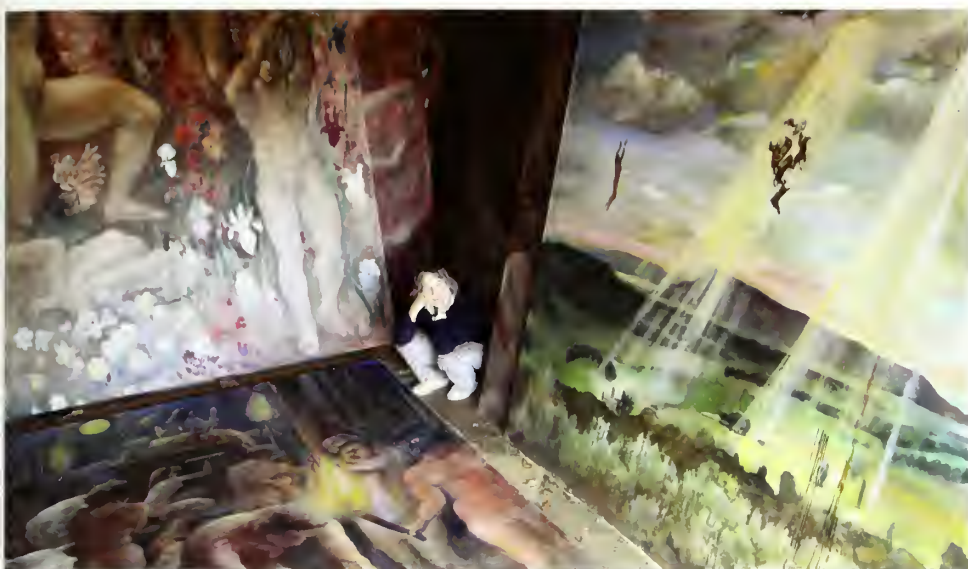
Craig's work, may be defined by her skill as a draftsman. "Je suis née pour dessiner," she says, citing the curse of her genius in the words of Degas. She was born to draw. In her Bronxville childhood she attended a progressive school, where, she says, "They made a big deal about my drawing." She has practiced and experimented with her skill her entire life, but she always returns to representational work that relies on the precision of her hand. "Finding the way a line follows form—you can't teach that. You can teach the proportions of a figure, but not the feeling for line and weight of a figure."

Craig first emerged as a portrait artist in the 1950s. After a brief marriage, she returned home to Bronxville and began dabbling as a fashion illustrator. Her brother came home from Yale on vacation and Craig did his portrait. Commissions from friends and neighbors soon followed. Early success led her to the Art Students League, but her study there was intermittent. Portrait commissions took up more of her time. "I had so many sometimes I was doing three people a day," she recalls. She studied a month here and there in New York with Edwin Dickinson, Hans Hofmann, and Jerry Farnsworth. After her marriage to Merlin Nelson in 1952, they spent time in Paris, where Craig studied at the Académie Julian for a short time. Her talent was evident and the teachers began observing her rather than instructing her. Portrait demonstrations became a regular part of her work.

"Because I could draw so well, I was always getting these prizes every time I showed something. I got fourteen prizes in four years," she told



CRAIG SURROUNDED BY A FEW OF HER PORTRAITS. SHE IS STANDING OVER A DEMONSTRATION PORTRAIT DONE IN THE 1950S WHEN THE SITTER SHOWED UP INEBRIATED



CRAIG WITH THREE OF HER LARGE CANVASES: *FLORA*, c. 2000 (APP. 120 BY 96 INCHES), *RITUAL SACRIFICE*, 2000 (APP. 138 BY 96 INCHES), AND *THE FORBES RANCH*, 2006 (APP. 103 BY 122 INCHES)

me. Among them were the first place Benjamin Altman figure prize from the National Academy of Design, the Gold Medal from the Allied Artists of America, the Audubon Artists Patron's Prize, and the Roger Fund Purchase Prize from the National Academy of Design. She had abundant collectors in wealthy Bronxville, which broadened with her notoriety. Her subjects have included Frank Lloyd Wright, Tyrone Power, Governor and Mrs. Herbert Lehman, Anjelica Huston, the Guinness family, the Forbes family, Princess Elizabeth of Yugoslavia, Hans Hofmann, Lady Jeanne Campbell, and Paul Cadmus among others.

Looking back, Craig recognizes the eminent twentieth-century classicist Frederic Taubes as a key influence in her development. Taubes, tireless writer and teacher, revived many of the techniques of Renaissance painters. Craig learned from him how to stretch and prime her own canvases—originally with two layers of rabbit skin glue and two layers of white lead paint for the ground, a process that could take four days to complete. She learned traditional methods of underpainting and glazing, spurred by the works of Titian she saw in Europe. These working methods added depth, transparency, and luster to her paintings. Taubes praised Craig in an article in *American Artist* magazine: "Some of her work approaches the best American portrait painter, Thomas Eakins. Few of our portraitists today can do such work."

Perhaps her success and ambition made the end of her home life inevitable. "I was not unhappy," Craig insists. Her husband was supportive. He purchased a home with a large studio for Craig. However, the role of housewife was not suited to her. "I was at a party in Bronxville and someone said they wished their wives could earn pin money like Nancy Ellen. I was upset. I wanted to be significant, not an adjunct." One evening Craig and her husband hosted a dinner with two close friends in attendance, Preston Carter and the poet David Lougee. "Merlin said he was using David and Pres to keep me content. Kind of a rare avis, life in a bell jar. As soon as he said it I realized I was in love with Pres, and I remember in the kitchen after that the room was tilted. I realized

this was the real love of my life." In 1962, Craig divorced Nelson and married Preston Carter. Their marriage would endure until Carter's death in 2007. Nelson took a job in London and took their two boys, Craig and Brian, with him. She cut off ties with her children. "Pres said it would be better for them to not be in touch. I don't know." The echoes of that decision remain with Craig today and surface again and again in her work.

With Preston's support, Craig devoted herself entirely to her art. "I couldn't have done it without him. He said, don't worry about the mess, just go out and paint." Her commissions supported the couple for decades while they lived a glamorous life among the world's elite. Summer would find them in their Truro home and the rest of the year they would live in New York City or Lyford Cay in the Bahamas, Montego Bay, Jamaica, or Marbella, Spain, wherever Craig's portrait commissions took them. Time at the Guinness estate in Ireland or the Forbes Ranch in Colorado. A few months living in a guesthouse at director John Huston's home. The pair were charming. Preston was well-read and witty. Craig was exuberant and fun.

Back in Truro, Craig would paint in the studio once used by William and Lucy L'Engle. The large space enabled Craig to paint enormous canvases. In the 1960s, she felt inspired to paint a series of birth paintings that were exhibited at the Graham Gallery in New York in 1967. The large canvases depict graphic images of women in childbirth in earthy colors. Critics were shocked. She scandalized New York papers with her nude portraits of society women in the 1970s. But classical themes constantly drew Craig's interest, which she credits to Taubes and the art historical education received from her husband. There are references to the work of Leonardo da Vinci and Peter Paul Rubens in large canvases of horses and nude riders. Depictions of mythical figures like Flora, Ajax, Narcissus, Actaeon, or Medea sacrificing her children. There are biblical themes fueled by Craig's devotion as a Christian Scientist. And more mundane but no less breathtaking studies of an Irish sheepmart or studio scenes containing self-portraits of the artist herself. That nod to Renaissance

and Baroque masters plays as a delightful double entendre in much of Craig's oeuvre. Each work demonstrates the uncanny sureness of her hand in drawing figures with generous, bold lines and the same instinctive insight into character that made her portraits such a success.

Craig continues her portrait work, but over time her old patrons passed away and there were fewer commissions. She and Carter settled into a calm life in Truro, focused on her art and his book collection. They kept to themselves. The quiet absorbed them. "I'd go to the studio and paint all day. We'd play tennis in the morning and we'd go swimming. He was so interesting and he read to me every night. That was our life."

After the loss of her life's companion, Craig opened herself back up to the world outside her studio, ready for another life born from the old. Her daily routine has helped her cut a new groove on her own. She goes to the Christian Scientist Church in Brewster on Sundays. Each day, she rides her bike to Ballston Beach to swim in the ocean. Every day she draws and paints. Art is the core of her routine. As Michael Giaquinto, Exhibition Curator of the Cape Cod Museum of Art, said in reference to Craig, "I think we're looking at art history."

TAYLOR M. POLITES received his MFA in Creative Writing from Wilkes University and received the 2009–10 Norris Church Mailing Scholarship for work on his novel, Weeping Willow. His articles on the Outer Cape's artists and history have appeared in a variety of regional publications. He lives in Provincetown.



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Compass in Hand

SELECTIONS FROM THE JUDITH ROTHSCHILD FOUNDATION CONTEMPORARY DRAWINGS COLLECTION, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

BY MARC J. STRAUS

I WENT TO SEE THIS SHOW AT MOMA knowing only that it represented a huge gift of some 2,500 drawings by the Judith Rothschild Foundation. I also heard that one of the MoMA Board members, Harvey Shipley Miller, an eminent collector of drawings, had put together this collection for the Foundation, which was then donated in whole to MoMA.

The last drawing survey at MoMA disabused me of any notion that drawing is a lesser practice than painting or sculpture. At the transitional space in Queens in 2002, "Drawing Now" focused on eighteen artists in some depth including Neo Rauch, Kiki Smith, and Russell Crotty. That show was one of the best at MoMA in a very long time. Drawing was at the heart of the work of these and other artists such as Jockum Nordström, whose work is nearly restricted to drawing. There were a few important finds such as Julie Mehretu.

"Compass in Hand" is a huge sprawling show with over three hundred works, many hung salon-style. There was some attempt at hanging things chronologically or thematically or according to whether the work was figurative or more graphological-based—an associative scribbling. At the very start was Rauch's 2003 *Verrat*, a large very strong work that begs the question, when is a painting on paper a drawing. Then a host of works all excellent and of similar vintage by Elizabeth Peyton, Francis Alÿs, and Michaël Borremans.

Then works by Wilhem Sasnal (I've only seen his paintings) and by Banks Violette (I've only seen his sculpture). And finally a 2001 major work by Paul McCarthy, *Penis Hat*, which I had seen earlier and priced and was told was sold. I have mostly avoided buying drawings but I would have sprung for this brutal and fluid work of debauchery.

What was immediately clear is that much of the work was new when purchased and accumulated in a short duration, 2003–2005. Several were extremely important examples of the artists' work, including those by Matthew Barney and Nordström. At the same time the exhibit was bogged down, buying so much in a short period and from just about everyone who was hot at that moment. I know this because I knew almost every artist. And in many cases hot names were included with work that made no sense. For instance, I know Matthew Monahan's sculptures well. The three uninteresting drawings here have nothing in common with his strong sculpture. Kara Walker's inclusion is a given, but one should have held out for her better work. Thomas Hirschhorn is here with a series I know well and admire but is largely collage.

The show then had a section of earlier work, a tiny 1981 Robert Gober drawing that I wish I owned since it is of a sculpture I have. Peter Doig—a given, but not these, or it does raise the question whether for some artists their drawing practice should stay in the bin. Here and there were works by Freud,

Baselitz, far from their best, and then four important works by Ray Johnson, a suite by Sherrie Levine, and rarities by Cady Noland. In general these older works suffered in comparison to the newer ones.

What I learned later from the \$66 catalog (who is expected to buy this at such a price?) is that this collection of 2,500 drawings was indeed blitz-bought by Shipley and Gary Garrels, MoMA drawings head at the time, and André Schlechtriem. There is an advantage here. All have enormous experience in contemporary drawing. But the downside is obvious—in the rush to collect there are too many *who-is-hot-now* works and plenty of clunkers. There is only so much of quality on the market in such a short time frame, and as it happened they did land some very important older works mostly for sale at that moment from the Eileen and Michael Cohen collection: a great 1963 Yayoi Kusama; important works by John Cage and Sigmar Polke.

The exhibit also suffers greatly because the group admittedly focused on only a few cities to do their vacuum-cleaning-like purchasing including New York, LA, London, and Berlin. It shows. There is too much that is good elsewhere including Romania, Madrid, and Poughkeepsie, NY. What is not said but seems apparent is that not only were locations restricted—how many places can you visit if you are buying 2,500 pieces in two years?—but so was sourcing. Frankly a few galleries got a great deal of the business. In New York I can count about eight whose rosters make up much of what came into the collection. But virtually every gallery has artists for whom drawing is important and the vast majority are neglected altogether. I can think of scores of young artists who might have been considered but are not represented by David Zwirner and the like: Andrew Sendor, Adam Stennett, Aaron Johnson, Ben Polsky, Tim Eitel, Josh Smith. Alas, Toba Khedoori does show with Zwirner and drawing is essentially what she does. If she wasn't included then that is a huge miss.

There is a bias that I mostly share, which is that most of the best sculptors draw well. I am not sure that Koons fits this bill or even Damien Hirst but surely Giacometti is its standard-bearer. One would expect that painters, especially figurative, whose work relies on the "line," would have strong drawings. That is certainly true of John Currin and Lisa Yuskavage.

Drawing is in most instances a more private practice than, say, sculpture. With drawing, instinct and immediacy are frontal. The "hand" of the artist is apparent and the work cannot be easily disguised. Bruce Nauman has indeed made any number of influential sculptures such as neons and plasters, but it is his drawings that truly come first. It sets the table for everything that follows. The



EVA HESSE, AMERICAN, BORN IN GERMANY, 1936–1970, NO TITLE, c. 1963, GOUACHE, INK, FELT-TIP PEN, CRAYON, PENCIL, AND CUT-AND-PASTED PAINTED PAPER ON PAPER, 19 625 BY 25 5 INCHES
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, THE JUDITH ROTHSCHILD FOUNDATION CONTEMPORARY DRAWINGS COLLECTION GIFT. © 2009 ESTATE OF EVA HESSE.
GALERIE HAUSER & WIRTH, ZÜRICH

same might be said of Gober except the drawings are more like little notebook doodles, perhaps important in understanding the genesis of the subsequent work, but less interesting as objects in their own right. Then there are sculptors such as Peggy Preheim (sadly missing here) who are better known for their drawings.

Drawings allow for less revision than painting or sculpture. Oil paint is a good cover-up and sculptures can be revised and revised before, and sometimes even after, they are made. It is such vulnerability of drawing that makes it so rewarding. We come closer to the imaginative machine at work—this is the artist with warts left in. It often provides the purest understanding of the larger body of work. No wonder then that many museums and collectors gravitate to drawings.

As to the title—“Compass in Hand”—the catalog provides no clue as to this choice. Overall there was much to learn here—I don’t expect to see anything quite like this in scale ever again; 2,500 drawings, some of them fabulous, all landing at MoMA is mostly a good thing (except that they beat me out of the McCarthy).

This collection is by far the largest body of drawings to come to MoMA and would not be possible without the largesse and dedication of Mr. Miller. But it suffers from speed and insiderness. It has a lot of missteps and artists du jour. More interesting perhaps would be to put aside the money and go buy over ten or twenty years. Hold out for “museum quality” and encourage a broad look by several people invested in looking everywhere. But one doesn’t turn down such a gift-horse in hand. Indeed there may be few such similar opportunities on



PAUL MCCARTHY, AMERICAN, BORN 1945, *PENIS HAT*, 2001, CUT-AND-PASTED PRINTED PAPER, CHARCOAL, PENCIL, AND OIL PASTEL ON CUT-AND-PASTED PAPER, 13 FEET 11.375 INCHES BY 8 FEET 4 INCHES
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, THE JUDITH ROTHSCHILD FOUNDATION CONTEMPORARY DRAWINGS COLLECTION GIFT
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NEO RAUCH, GERMAN, BORN 1960, *VERRAT (TREASON)*, 2003, OIL ON PAPER, 8 FEET 4.375 INCHES BY 6 FEET .375 INCHES
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the horizon for any institution—it remains to be seen what happens with the expansive and incomparable Werner Kramarsky drawing collection.

That Mr. Miller endowed the MoMA drawing Chair, that he is the Trustee of the Foundation, and on the drawing committee of MoMA, raises plenty of issues. Perhaps a better model was one that was established by Larry Aldrich in the '60s. He offered that Mr. Barr and his legions of associates were free to choose any work of art for MoMA for \$1,000 or less and Larry would pay. Of course they turned him down, as did other NYC institutions, not wanting to fill their storage with mediocrity. But then after Larry did just that on his own, had trudged up the stairs of so many studios and acquired some three hundred of these cheapies, including Eva Hesse’s greatest work, Mr. Barr relented and took almost everything.

The point is that to build a worthy collection requires looking at a great deal of art and taking the time that is required. MoMA has money for drawing acquisitions but nowhere near this scale, so the quandary. Could they have gotten this bequest and then taken their time—like ten or twenty years? Undoubtedly not. Nonetheless, I can’t place my head around more than ten or twenty art acquisitions a year—beyond thirty and I’d probably forget exactly why I wanted it. That is the big shortcoming here. And despite all attempts otherwise by MoMA their racks are filled now with lots more of little consequence. Their stated rationalization is they will have the right to deaccession. That is not an easy thing for a museum, and is unlikely, and time is better spent getting it as right as can be possible the first time around.

MARC J. STRAUS is a doctor and a poet. He has three collections of poetry from *Tri-Quarterly Books*: *One Word* (1994), *Symmetry* (2000), and *Not God* (2006). His poems have appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, *Field*, and *Ploughshares*. He has written widely on contemporary art and reviews each *Whitney Biennial* for *Provincetown Arts*. In 2004, he and his wife, Livia, founded the *Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art*, in Peekskill, New York.

The Good Daughter

THE UNCONVENTIONAL LIFE AND ART OF DANIELLE MAILER

BY PEG GOLDBERG LONGSTRETH

IT ALL STARTED WITH AN ARTICHOKE.

Danielle Mailer was scarcely more than a toddler when she became entranced with the patterns people's teeth marks leave when they chew on the soft pulp of an artichoke leaf, the prickly texture of the leaves on the outside.

Her parents, Peruvian artist/author Adele Morales Mailer, and her father, Norman Mailer, had just disengaged themselves from the most infamous of Mailer's six marriages, ending when Mailer stabbed his wife at a party, landing him in Bellevue Hospital in the process.

Danielle and her mother and sister then moved to a small, cold-water flat in the West Village (which she describes as "one large artist's palette"). The one food that was plentiful in their home was artichokes. Mounds and mounds of artichokes. Everywhere.

Her mother, a recovering alcoholic prone to bouts of depression, would sit with Danielle at her side and, day after day, they would feast on artichokes. Adele (Danielle always refers to her mother by her first name) would speak of her Peruvian heritage, regaling Danielle with stories of her Cuban grandmother while they feasted or when she painted. The vibrant, South American/Cuban palette was everywhere Danielle turned in their home. Adele, who was a student of Hans Hoffman, suffered from what is now known as post-traumatic stress syndrome, making it difficult for her to focus on her artwork and take the leap into fame, which Danielle clearly believes her mother deserves. Possessing a great design sense, her mother was hired by Bergdorf's as their first papiér-mâché artist, creating display windows for the company.

As a child, Danielle freely admits, she spent hours trying to capture the essence, not just of still-life paintings, but of artichokes in particular. She became obsessed with trying to replicate the bite marks, a single leaf, the complete artichoke, mounds of artichokes. And she persisted, becoming a Surrealist/Magic Realist painter in the process.

Amazingly, in an unconventional family (which included nine siblings and step-siblings, the result of Norman Mailer's six marriages), Danielle Mailer did not just survive—she thrived. Interestingly, although her mother is, by all accounts, a fine artist, Danielle credits her *father* with recognizing her latent talent and encouraging it. Even more amazingly, though clearly frustrated and doubtless horrified when Danielle was diagnosed as dyslexic, Norman Mailer never made his daughter feel inferior. He set out to solve it. There were assignments. Lots of assignments. "I was eleven before I finally learned to read comfortably," she confesses, as we speak in one of several phone interviews that began late last fall and continued through both our record cold winters—in Connecticut, where she lives, and in Florida, where I reside.

Within ten minutes of our first telephone conversation, it is apparent that Danielle needs no prompting to fill my brain to overflowing with her highly unusual life story. Just as her paintings and sculptures are breathtakingly original, true gems of genius, so her love of her family is part and parcel of her very being.

Norman Mailer needs no other spokesperson to extol his virtues than his daughter Danielle.

"My father was a *very* good father," Danielle emphasizes. "He had custody of all his children every weekend and all summer long. Every weekend he would pick me up, and off we would go to the Metropolitan Museum, where he would help me learn to articulate what I was looking at."

She laughs. "This was when girls everywhere wanted Barbie dolls. Instead, my father gave me a book with the complete works of Hieronymus Bosch!"

As the various marriages fell by the wayside, and the number of children increased exponentially, Danielle insists the experience, particularly during



DANIELLE MAILER IN HER STUDIO, 2008

the summers they all spent together in Provincetown, was memorable in a positive way. Somewhat akin to going to camp.

"We had projects. Lots of projects. One time we all got cameras and made films. Actually, we're all very tight," she continues. "Kind of like a clan."

They're also all very artistic: with artists, musicians, vocalists, writers, and a movie producer in the esoteric mélange. While there was a succession of "wicked stepmothers" to try to cope with, Danielle credits her father's final wife, Norris Church Mailer, with working hard to create harmony in the group. "She did a wonderful job."

After graduating in 1979 from Maine's Bowdoin College with a BFA, Mailer then studied with George McNeil at the New York Studio School, where he helped her hone her skills with more traditional landscape and still-life paintings. "Actually," she remarks, "my best landscape painting was done in Provincetown, which I continue to regard as my home." Still more studies occurred, this time at New York's School of Visual Arts, where she studied graphic design and illustration. "I was determined to be able to obtain a 'real job' until I could make it as an artist. Not just have a career as a waitress."

Finding employment as a graphic artist, at one point working at *ARTnews* magazine, Mailer then married a professional juggler, one sufficiently talented that he was awarded a prestigious MacArthur grant. To this marriage a daughter, Isabella, was born. But the marriage to a man she describes as "dark and brooding" failed, and she found herself a single mother with a small child to raise and support. And art to create, for everything that was part of her ongoing life experience now found itself somehow on her canvases, their rectangular shapes beginning to be filled with women, the hot, vibrant palette so much a part of her Peruvian heritage. Not to be ignored, of course, were the artichokes. And chili peppers. And bones. And skull heads. And dice. And vines, their tendrils framing one canvas here, intertwining with a torso there. All part of her Peruvian/Incan heritage, all objects that her mother collected and placed in shadow

boxes throughout their flat. Often there were carrots. "I love being able to paint carrots with their yummy cadmium orange straight out of the tube."

"Always paint what you know," advised her father as she obsessively strived to lay down on canvas the dreams and images that filled her brain to overflowing.

Enter Peter McEachern into her life. It takes but a few seconds of studying Mailer's body of work to correctly deduce that Danielle selected well the second time around. A professional jazz trombonist of some note, McEachern brought his two children, a daughter and a son, to the marriage. Danielle considers them hers.

And why do you know instantly this is a good marriage? Because trombones began to appear in Mailer's paintings. They, too, like the artichokes and chili peppers, appear everywhere, as recurrent borders on her works or, more significantly, as a single trombone near the area where her heart resides. DNA strands, often confetti-like, are painted as borders in one painting, then appear as exuberant bits of confetti in another. Simon, her beloved Jack Russell terrier, often is prominently displayed, as are more vines and tendrils, particularly to border the paintings.

"My mother should have been an interior designer," Danielle says, laughing, then continues: "She was always ahead of the trends with the ivy designs she painted on our walls, or the leopard skin fabrics she used for the furniture."

For years Mailer's narrative paintings, while enigmatic, nontraditional spiritual landscapes in content, retained a traditional rectangular form, as did the addition of hand-painted monoprints. For the most part occupied by a single woman whose face most often is clearly Danielle, her canvases began to fairly ooze her sexuality and strength. You see this even in the quiet stillness of the tiny meditative paintings. You see it in the Superwomen attitudes of the figures bounding off the canvases.



THE GOOD DAUGHTER, 2007, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 8 BY 8 INCHES

And, most recently, you see it in another dimension: Mailer's women have literally flown off the canvases. Initially two-dimensional silhouettes painted on masonite, intended to be hung on the walls, Danielle has added floor sculptures—their steel silhouette forms painted on both sides. In the process, the artwork becomes a celebration of feminine sexuality and strength. Incorporating her mother's passion for leopard skin, Danielle has become the tantalizing Leopard Woman in her painting/sculpture entitled *The Other Side of 50*. The piece, outrageous in its posturing, is rampant with attitude. Lots of attitude.

Her wall sculpture entitled *Blue*, a nude, was placed in a storefront window in the otherwise quiet community of Torrington, Connecticut, and was cause for high drama when a cluster of offended citizens demanded its immediate removal a few months ago.

Henri Matisse's influence on Mailer's artwork, both her paintings and her cutouts, is unmistakable. Matisse first scissored his cutouts into existence nearly eighty years ago. Danielle, energy bubbling from her every brushstroke, has taken her cutouts to a whole new level of complexity. Entire small paintings are now nestled within the endless patterns swirling within each figure. In *Interior* an entire small still life is nestled just beneath the woman's breasts. The still life includes a wooden chair with a plate containing three limes/lemons. Gaze a bit lower and smile as you realize a luscious piece of key lime pie occupies the dancing figure's pubic mound.

I am instantly reminded of the immortal lines in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*:

Fondling, she saith, 'since I have hemm'd thee here . . .
I shall be a park, and thou shalt be my deer.
Feed where thou wilt, on mountains or in dale;
Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.

Mailer also admits to being influenced by Kahlo, Klimt, and Chagall. I examine her work and see a decided kinship with Niki de Saint Phalle.

"Always paint what you know." The insistent message of her father replays over and over again in her brain.

"I was *always* a good daughter," Danielle emphasizes, as I ask



BIRDSONG, 2009, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 20 BY 16 INCHES

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her about a painting titled *The Good Daughter*. The painting, quiet, meditative, reveals Danielle seated in a comfortable chair, cradling Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*. She painted it knowing her father, the brilliant, irascible Norman Mailer, was doing the one thing she thought impossible: he was dying.

"How many times and ways can I paint me before I'm at risk of appearing narcissistic?" Danielle frets, changing the subject to less emotionally charged terrain.

Not to worry. While her paintings/sculptures clearly now most often feature some aspect of Danielle, with a scattering of paintings featuring her children (*Birdsong* features the maternal Danielle, embracing her bird-figured son), this work has nothing to do with narcissism. It has everything to do with remembering her father's admonition: always paint what you know.

These paintings, part autobiographical, part mythological, speak of the resilience of the human spirit.

Her father frequently told his brood: if you have the urge to create artistically and fail to do so, you are cheating the Cosmos.

Danielle Mailer is *not* cheating the Cosmos.

PEG GOLDBERG LONGSTRETH is the owner of Longstreth-Goldberg ART gallery in Naples, Florida, and is also the CEO of Gold Mountain Press, a publishing company that celebrates art and the human spirit. An arts and music critic for the local media, she is the coauthor of *A Bear Called Charlie: A Memoir*. Her first nonfiction book, *Icons from Hell*, is scheduled for release this fall.

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George Platt Lynes Lena Horne 1930s vintage gelatin silver print

Foreword

By Christine Gelineau

There are landscapes that exist as much in our imaginations as in the breathing world, places we take with us as Yeats took the lake isle of Innisfree with him, so that of that landscape he could say *always night and day I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore*—even while he stood *on the roadway, or on the pavements grey* he would hear it in the deep heart's core. The landscape of my deep heart's core has always been Cape Cod, most especially the sand spit at Popponesset in Mashpee, where I've walked, when I could, since the 1950s. Diminished over the decades by the depredations of jetties and dredging, what remains of the Spit at Popponesset (protected now to some degree by the efforts to save the plovers' nesting grounds) is still my nostalgic favorite, while the beaches of the islands or the Outer Cape in truth now better match the imagined Cape Cod sea/sky/sand borderlands that I carry with me always.

When I received the happy charge to assemble a gathering of poets for the 25th anniversary edition of *Provincetown Arts*, my immediate conception of the task was to see it as analogous to a Provincetown dinner party: camaraderie, the sun going down beyond the dunes, voices in conversation, confidences, impassioned argument, laughter, and song. Particularly for a special anniversary such as this, my feeling was that the guest list should aim for a mix of old friends familiar to the scene, friends newly met whose roots also run deep there on the Cape (or at least the northeastern coast), and, it is to be hoped, a smattering as well of invitees from further afar, to give spark and texture and insight.

What I found in inviting poets with a long association with *Provincetown Arts*, and also in inviting poets who have not previously appeared here but who know of the magazine, is that others uniformly share my deep appreciation for this special setting. Here in *Provincetown Arts*, the poems have the good fortune to share their pages not only with the wider literary world but also with the visual arts, with architecture, the opportunity to engage spatially in provocative associations of many kinds. The words luxuriate in their generous allotment of white space, the glossy pages lighting the poems like sealight.

I did suggest, but not require, in my invitations that 2010 would be a good year for sea, summer, and celebration, and I hope you will find, as I do, that the fourteenth poem of this selection is the poem of the gathering as a whole. So rather than my offering here any suggestions as to who was included and why, I want simply to say to the poets who contributed and to you, the reader, thanks for coming, come in, have a glass of wine, mingle, linger, enjoy.

Jan Beatty

In Waking: Summer

The happiest moment in my life was waking
next to you without knowing it was the happiest—

without knowing wreckage and plunder from
the night before, yet more than a breeze (summer)

coming at me, more like a firestorm of goodness
from you—but not the cheap 5¢ & 10¢ goodness—

the lovely, rare kind that glitters/then runs deep
through yesterday and into mud, through the

blood of ancestors not met, lies construed for no
good reason, then running through to the other

side of time—that kind of good that comes
through you—straight at me, in summer: waking.

Neil Shepard

Meadow Cove Cottage, Deer Isle, Maine

Last year I came alone to finish a last draft
of a book with no deadline, the beginning
of late middle age, the osprey cry
overhead for my ears only.

This year I can compose nothing—
my daughter singing Madonna in the shower,
my wife scheduling the days in paradise,
ordering lobsters at the pound, a whale-watch,
a bird-walk, her lovely voice on the phone.

My mantic writing table wobbles
on its wicker legs. My daughter says,
let's gather blueberries. My wife says, let's discover
clams bubbling in the mudflats. Summer comes

unglued from routine, the Maine
pines shine. Laughing gulls cry outside.

Last year, I watched for hours the osprey's
gyroscopic motions, how it kept
its center, its surveying eye,
no matter how the gusts undercut it—

then, the flash of talons, the abrupt
drop, the fish whose fate had come to an end,
the flat rock where it flew to devour its meal.

At another spot, an eagle
seemed tied to its eyrie, all day
plunging to the surf for fish,
flapping back to the nest where fledglings

angled their dark mouths. Binoculars let me watch
her tear meat with a yellow beak and
a measured, bloody eye.

I've heard that eagles mate in mid-air,
copulate as they fall, and in the mad rush
of such feathery clasp and company, sometimes
seem to forget their solitary natures,

orgasm, swoon, and crash into the sea.

Linda Pastan

Ars Poetica

"Well, less is more, Lucrezia . . ."

—Robert Browning

I am working towards
the one line poem,

the shortest distance
between two points,

from past to future,
for instance,

from copper-colored autumn
to winter.

But one word
might be better,

for isn't a single bullet
to the head enough?

Or one shaft of sunlight
through the trees—

that celestial finger
pointing?

I'll remove the restless
back and forth of verbs,

the obfuscating
adjectives.

It's nouns that matter:
leaf; child; wave—

the single one that splinters
on the empty sand.

But maybe even one word
is too much,

maybe a silence
that is infinite

is what I'm after, a poem
that reverberates

on the virgin page
the moment

before language
is invented.

Chris Bullard

O Brilliant Kids

The green and silver sea reversed,
pulling me on my inner tube
outside the rip.

Despite my kicking,
I was floating to Europe.

Knee high in the waves, mom
raised a hand to grip the funnel
of a shout.

As I made it out,
she was blowing me a kiss.

I already had the knowledge
that things like school and punishment
required waiting,
so I dangled my feet,
over the center lip

and kept my butt to the seat,
wondering only if

I might see fish.
I wasn't the sort to slip
off the edge

like Melville's Pip,
a small boy left
in the open sea,
who went mad as he treaded
in that immensity.

I was easy enough with the drift
even as I wheeled,
clockwise, in my clock ship
to face the gulls
on the remote horizon.

I dipped and rolled,
but the sea reversed, again,
and pushed me out unhurt.
I ran to my mom
with my tube pulled up like a skirt.

Immersed in her arms
and rocked on her hips,
I was glad to be back with the mother
I had started with
instead of that waiting, inevitable other.

Marilyn Chin

Horns: A Coda

During the tenth month of the first year of the reign of Emperor Jing, a little girl from the southernmost province of Guangdong grew horns. The horns were hideously sharp with little tufts of greenish hair sprouting in the ridges. When the new emperor heard about this monster, he ordered his five most valiant soldiers to execute her. But, when the soldiers arrived, the girl's grandmother had already sent her into the hills. The old woman, then, with proper demeanor, served the men last year's inferior crop of high mountain tea and quoted "The Book of Changes." *When an evil minister of state usurps power, the indigenes will grow horns.* The head soldier replied with a quick couplet from "The Treatise of the Five Monarchs." *Little girls, no matter how mistreated or angry, must not grow horns. Feudal citizens, no matter how unhappy, must not revolt against the Lord.* Whereupon, he took out his sword and slayed the grandmother and mounted her head on a pole, as a warning to other renegade villagers.

Centuries of chaos and pogroms followed. Finally, rebellions were quashed, marauders were executed and there were no more incidents of little girls growing horns. By now, most of the world's citizens have smooth, unfurrowed hairlines. Albeit there was a sighting of a pair of razor-sharp growths erupting on the forehead of a little brown girl. She was last seen in the autumn of 2008, smooching with her surfer-dude boyfriend and strolling on a sun-flooded promenade in San Diego.

Susan Mitchell

Little Bird

when I think of the mind's eye your mind's eye and mine
when I try to see within the mind's eye my mind's
eye and yours lidless colorless unblinking

when I think of the quickness of the mind's eye its
flash and alacrity its kindlings and gestations
when I think of the quick of its quickness

that vital sore place the wound the hurt from which comes
oh I don't know what comes from that place always
young always tender if it is what gives

the world its brightness its shine or if it is what receives
the light of the world even the light darkness
gives off from its own raw nerve

when I think of the tears of the mind's eye tears
made of mind yet somehow wet with a wetness
made of mind's streams and springs

when I think of tears real tears within my mind's eye
your tears or mine or the world's within your
mind's eye within its depths the depths

of my mind's eye its springs and fountains when I
protest why not a mind's ear for surely I can
hear you calling me when you are not calling

and hear my mind's voice as I write *my mind's voice*
saying and unsaying and how many times have I
touched my tongue to your tongue

your mind's tongue to my mind's tongue in the great
mall of the mind's eye in that metropolis where
windows are always opening and closing

lights flashing on and off and though I wanted this
to be a love poem about you and me it will not
be a love poem though I wanted to place us

both in my mind's eye as in a tondo the two of us
reaching out of some window of my mind
toward a tree where a little bird

just alighted such a brightness in its eye such a
quickness this bird with its breast of
pale yellow down so softly soft

J. D. Schraffenberger

Flux

though I wanted to see this bird and the two of us
reaching toward its bounce and lightness
wanted to touch in my mind's

eye its throat swelling with song just before sleep
my sleep next to your sleep in my mind's eye
your hand your real hand next to my own

which in my mind's eye I could see within your
mind's eye the two hands touching there
came a sound of wind blowing through

deserted streets such a sound of wind rushing forward
then sucking back dust and debris leaves papers
from how many streets I could not say

of the world sucking back voices *don't look don't look*
and then *I have seen the deaths of children I*
must wash my mouth with hunger with farewell

voices which sounded like my voice and my mind's voice
though in another key perhaps or mode *look here*
are its swaddling clothes and here look

the little bloody basket the future is carried in
fragments my mind's voice kept repeating
like one afraid to forget something

important like one who needs to get it through their
head or learn by heart *the bellybutton is an eye*
always searching for and bald eyes

eyes without aroma without sap until I had to get up
and search the streets of my mind for pieces
for paper for pen for another room

with light search one street where dogs were barking
and large birds with dark heads and bodies
some on the ground some still wheeling

over stomachs flapping their wings and hands still reaching
for mouths mouths deep in my mind some with tongues
some without calling *little bird little bird*

Where spangles of starlings bathe a call and response of shivery
dips and shakes, where the drake mallard and his mottled
hen glide certain of their convictions, their lots and lives,
their deaths, their fates;

Where milkweed and clover, where the fragile shoots of spider
moss yawn awake, centrifugal, reaching, compelled, neither
choosing nor deliberate, neither probate nor free, but
connate and wild;

Where far-flung particulate masses—what dust! this mist! these
seeds!—where hollow strands of atomic vibration, where
twig and bush, light and bone come humming toward the
surf;

Where estuarine mudflats, where tidal streams unfurl,
explosive, entropic as the stars;

Where the Ohio and Mississippi, the Chenango and
Susquehanna, where the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the
unseen Sarasvati meet in congress;

We cleanse ourselves of undue influence, become tonic and
broad, make music, the stretched cords of muscle twined
about and cleaving to the heartwood of our spines, viscera
taut and ringing, and all the drops of our blood have eyes
that open and look out.

Brendan Galvin

Field Notes

Shreds of non sequitur, clipped
phrases and scribbles
clumped like compost, then stirred up
and returned to in a week. The usual
pre-poem mud: at times no way of telling
vowel from consonant, but hoping
for clues, accretions, until
the return of calendars, proxies,
signatures, panics of subtraction
that bury the notebook.

Driving down route 28 this morning
an osprey ripped me from lawyers
and pigeonholes as surely as if
it had plucked me off the ground.
It flew above Ryders Cove
with a rag of tarp or plastic lifted
off a workboat's deck and borne
like a trailing banner through the air,
toward the skyward tip of a rusty pylon
where its mate tucked and worried at
the impressive fright wig
of their nest under construction.

I said it out loud—Excelsior!—
and at home began to draw arrows
across the page, connecting a few tendrils
that appeared out of the heap,
circling and underlining, nudging
whatever wanted to grow there
toward the promise of several hours
exempt from gravity.

Denise Duhamel

Yellow

In the middle of our kitchen dance,
you leaned me onto the wall and pressed—
the butcher island behind you, the dirty dishes,
the pans, a lipstick-smudged cup.
When I saw your bright kitchen,
I might have said, or at least thought,
yellow is the color of the solar plexus.
You pulled my arms above my head,
pressed my palms flat with one hand,
your other hand on my face, then breast.
It was fluid, like movie sex, no awkwardness.
I think I did say that I'd read
yellow was the happiest color
as we ate the dinner you'd made
on the table you'd built.
Your kitchen was a school bus, a taxi, a number 2 pencil.
Your kitchen was yellow, the lined paper
upon which we were writing our story.

Laura Baudo

Why I Wish I Sailed

I want the language of it starting with
simple necessary vocabulary like bow,
draw, mainmast, mizzen and midship.
And to earn the dreamy terms that surely
swam out of the notions of night watch
when eyes and minds were scarred
by stars no one else was watching. Chine,
tide lash, sloop, by the lee and tender.

The romance is of course what I have
been after all along, that memory of what
never happened. Of me standing on a
wooden deck wearing something
white that featured my strong lean
arms as I capably trimmed a sail
and you capably pulled on what
I was wearing, teaching me there is

no such thing as even keel and no
fiddle that can keep you from rolling
off the edge of desire when what
is stronger than anybody's design
pulls you full and by into what sailors
know. Sea wash, salt spray, wing and wing
the purchase of another from where they
were into the yawing of a different day.

Gail Mazur

While You Were Out

The schooner *Hindu* dropped its sails, the bay was calm.
An unflappable egret posed alone on your studio rail.

The telephone rang. If this were a pink slip torn
from a memo pad, I couldn't say who'd called, or when
or why we'd fought so bitterly last night. Two small boys
called out, high chords of hilarity, tossing dead horseshoe crabs

as far as they could, not far at all. Mailer traipsed along the flats
in his yellow bikini, his gray curls wild, pugnacious masculine

overhang of belly, his arthritic little bulldog panting to keep up.
A slender girl beside him jotting nattered oddments of his prose.

For a minute, our era's brute injustices felt almost settled,
its perpetual wars the memoir of a battle-scarred contrarian

enlightening his disciple. I wanted to be sun-drunk, asleep to everything.
Where had you gone? A slow August day and you were out.

This is my memo to you. I walked on the wet sand
as the incoming tide insinuated contradictions,

I collected beach glass, not questioning the pleasure
I took combing for sand-washed fragments metamorphosed

from bottles sailors tossed long ago into a suffering sea.
Purposeless day, reading random pages of old books—astronomy,

elegies, a Venetian mystery, greedy for good information. Greedy,
I went to the garden and clipped pink blooms from my Butterfly Bush

and deep crimson blooms from the Love Lies Bleeding. The perfume
of our one life permeated the rooms, contrition's delicate bouquet.

All along the shore, in wooden houses vulnerable as ours
to fire and wind and time, others may have been fuming

or weeping, too, their human despairs let loose on one another,
little microcosmic wars, everyone standing in the breach.

Tonight, Mars will be nearer the moon than it's been in 60,000 years,
and though the radio claims it's bright red to the naked eye,

all week we've raked the night skies and only seen something flashier
and slightly pinker than all the blushing stars we can't identify:

timeless celestial chart, imperishable astral chart that terrifies.
Why quarrel now? Why tap deadly cracks in our little eggshell house?

B. H. Fairchild

Abandoned Grain Elevator

after a photograph by Sant Khalsa

And so, waiting here, the eremites of grain:
woman, girl, a paper angel seated on the elevator steps
where dust from a caliche road pales the woman's shoes,
her daughter's feet. The horizon is their god of open spaces,
the angel singing silent hymns to pass the time
the last workers bore upon their backs.

Husks drift across the road like molted feathers
or the sloughed scales of cottonmouths.
Weeds waist-high shade the odd shoe still laced,
a Coke carton bleeding into bluestem, dulled scraps of newsprint
that say who died in Pride or Bonner Springs two years ago.
Even obits have a home here in the ground
someone's grandson disked before the land was sold,
before the family moved to Kansas City.

Two farm cats sleep in bunch grass below the steps.
The angel lifts its wings, and the girl
takes up its song, *may the circle be unbroken,*
by and by, Lord, by and by, her voice lost in the toiling winds
that rouse the sleeping earth, then lay it back
on the shoulders of the highway that led them there.
Singing, they walk toward the horizon. The horizon recedes.

Andrea Cohen

To the Lifeboats

To the lifeboats, says the sign, in Portuguese
and Spanish above the door leading
to the deck, leading to the sea
from the dinner table overflowing at Bob and Lise's,
post-sunset, with Portuguese stew and a Spanish
Flamenco dancer everybody wants to bed,
with cursing and affection in fourteen languages,
with magnums of red wine that disappear
and re-appear, with a toast to Long Point,
whose flashing green beacon keeps the lovesick
ferry captain from crashing into the breakwater.
In attendance, we've got a Buddhist torch singer
channeling Edith Piaf and Bob Dylan,
we've got our own Bob crooning the ghostly, atonal
suicide ditty his mother fed him as a boy, we've got
the retired coastal geologist explaining
that the spit of land we're perched on
is fast eroding, washing away, which heats
things up, so someone opens a window,
admitting our frailty, admitting the sea
breeze, and the Flamenco dancer shows
us a polka, whispering, *that's my secret*
pleasure, and the recent widow grieves
briefly behind her blue sleeve, then rejoins
the festivities. In the end, we have the beginning
and the end and the whole unraveling in between.
We have the nearly full moon
rising, orange and pocked like a Fiesta Ware
plate floated up from a ghost ship. We've got
the tide coming in, the specter of undressing
for the ritual midnight swim. We've got the geologist

repeating his science lesson, the melting hand-
 churned cherry ice cream his prop, and we
 all see the writing on the wall:
Alos botes salvaridas
Para os botes salva-vidas,
 directions to the lifeboat
 in Spanish and Portuguese, the sign's elegant
 steel lettering the one memento a daughter
 salvaged from her father's sinking ship.
 Forget what the sign says, we're all
 going down, in the ship, in the lifeboats,
 in the manse beside the sea. But now
 we're up to our ears in singing, and the shy
 puppeteer pipes up to ask: that fable
 about the needle, that's about
 true love, isn't it? And even
 those of us who don't know the story,
 who have no idea what she's talking
 about, nod in agreement, thinking about what we stitch
 so clumsily together, about the needle's prick,
 like that of the beach rose stem, the *rosa rugosa*
 that grows everywhere here. We nod as those
 blooms nod in high wind, because the only
 story worth telling, whether you're selling
 lifeboats or needles or soup with linguica,
 is about true love, right? Why
 else guffaw or go teary as the ship
 goes down, as the sliver of land in this ever-
 shifting light show slips from us, if not, amiga,
 amigo, for the salt-sting of true-blue love?

Laura Baudó, Poetry Editor at www.womensvoicesforchange.org, has published poems in *The Southampton Review* and in *Green Mountains Review* and as part of "Take Joy," an original concert production at Strathmore Hall in Bethesda, Maryland. She has been a guest lecturer in poetry at the Hotchkiss School and lives and works in New York City and Northampton, Massachusetts, where she is at work on her first collection, titled *Under the Influence*.

Jan Beatty's books include *Red Sugar*, *Boneshaker*, and *Mad River*, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. She is host and producer of *Prosody*, a public radio show featuring the work of national writers. She directs the creative writing program at Carlow University, where she teaches in the MFA program.

A native of Jacksonville, Florida, **Chris Bullard** lives in Collingswood, New Jersey, and works for the federal government as an Administrative Law Judge. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and is currently enrolled in the writing program at Wilkes University. Bullard's work has appeared in journals such as *Green Mountains Review*, *Nimrod*, *Pleiades*, *Rattle*, and others, while his chapbook *You Must Not Know Too Much* was published in 2009 by Plan B Press as the winner of their chapbook award.

Marilyn Chin's books have become Asian American classics and are taught all over the world. Her books of poetry include *Rhapsody in Plain Yellow*; *The Phoenix Gone, the Terrace Empty*; and *Dwarf Bamboo*. Her new book of wild girl tales, *Revenge of the Mooncake Vixen* (Norton, 2009), will make you laugh out loud. Her recent awards include a United States Artists grant, a Fulbright to Taiwan, four Pushcart Prizes, and a Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Fellowship at Harvard. She teaches at San Diego State University.

Andrea Cohen is the author of the poetry collections *Long Division*, *The Cartographer's Vacation*, and *Kentucky Derby* (forthcoming from Salmon Poetry). Her poems and stories have appeared in journals such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Threepenny Review*, *Glimmer Train*, and *Poetry*. She directs the Blacksmith House Poetry Series in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Denise Duhamel's most recent poetry titles are *Ka-Ching!* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), *Two and Two* (Pittsburgh, 2005), *Mille et un sentiments* (Firewheel, 2005), and *Queen for a Day: Selected and New Poems* (Pittsburgh, 2001). A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, she is an associate professor at Florida International University in Miami.

B. H. Fairchild's third book, *The Art of the Lathe*, was a Finalist for the National Book Award and also received the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award, the William Carlos Williams Award, and the PEN Center West Poetry Award. Fairchild's fourth book of poems, *Early Occult Memory Systems of the Lower Midwest*, appeared in 2002 and received the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Gold Medal in Poetry from the California Book Awards, and the Bobbitt Prize from the Library of Congress. *Usher*, his sixth book of poems, was published in May 2009.

Brendan Galvin is the author of sixteen collections of poems. *Habitat: New and Selected Poems 1965–2005* (LSU Press) was a finalist for the National Book Award. *Ocean Effects* appeared in fall 2007; *Whirl Is King* in 2008. His translation of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* appeared in the Penn Greek Drama Series in 1998. Galvin's awards include a Guggenheim, two NEA fellowships, the Sotheby Prize (England), *Poetry*'s Levinson Prize, the Hardison Prize from the Folger Shakespeare Library, the *Seawanee Review*'s

Aiken Taylor Award, as well as the Boatwright Prize from *Shenandoah*. He lives in Truro, Massachusetts.

Gail Mazur is the author of six books of poems, including *Zeppo's First Wife: New and Selected Poems*, which in 2006 won the Massachusetts Book Award and was finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. She is Writer in Residence in the Emerson College MFA program, and her latest book, titled *The Age*, will be published in spring 2011. Mazur lives in Cambridge and Provincetown, where she is a longtime member of FAWC's Writing Committee.

Susan Mitchell is the author of three books of poems, most recently *Erotikon* and *Rapture*, which won the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award and was a National Book Award Finalist. Mitchell holds the Mary Blossom Lee Endowed Chair at Florida Atlantic University and teaches in its MFA Writing Program.

Linda Pastan's twelfth book of poems, *Queen of a Rainy Country*, was published by Norton. She received the Ruth Lilly Prize in 2003, and was twice a finalist for the National Book Award. From 1991 to 1995 she was Poet Laureate of Maryland. Her new book, *Traveling Light*, is due in January 2011.

J. D. Schraffenberger is the assistant editor of the *North American Review* and the author of a book of poems, *Saint Joe's Passion* (Etruscan, 2008). His most recent other work appears or is forthcoming in *Poet*

Lore, *Mid-American Review*, *DIAGRAM*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, and elsewhere. He is an assistant professor of English at the University of Northern Iowa.

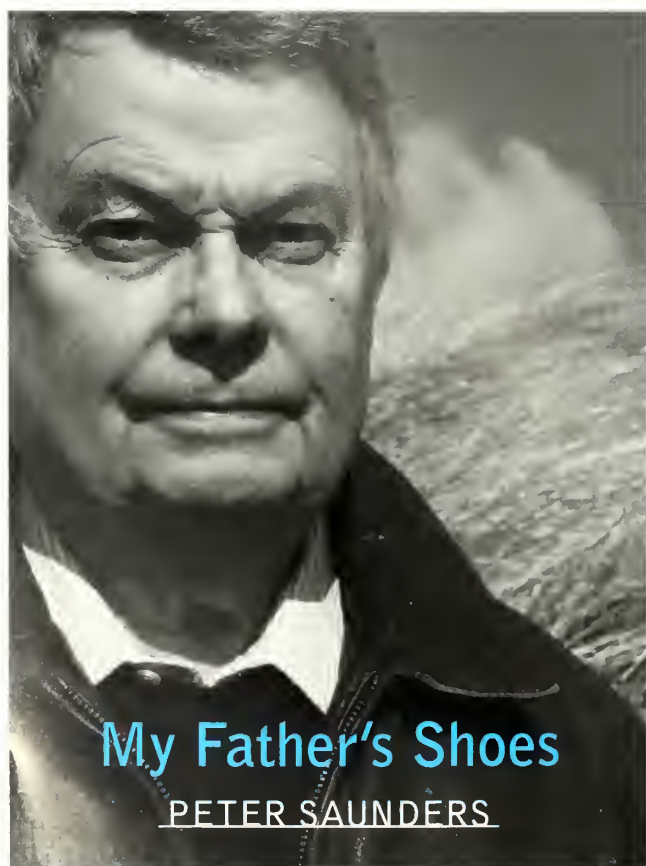
Neil Shepard has published three books of poetry: *Scavenging the Country for a Heartbeat*, which won the First Book Award from Mid-List Press; *I'm Here Because I Lost My Way*; and, most recently, *This Far from the Source*. His poems have appeared widely and been featured at *Poetry Daily* and *Verses Daily*. Recently retired from the BFA Writing Program at Johnson State College, Shepard now teaches in the Wilkes University low-residency MFA program in creative writing. He founded and directed for eight years the Writers Program at the Vermont Studio Center; founded and remains long-time editor of *Green Mountains Review*; and is a founding member of the jazz-poetry ensemble PoJazz.



Christine Gelineau's poetic sequence *Appetite for the Divine* has just been published by Ashland Poetry Press. She is also the author of *Remorseless Loyalty*, winner of the Snyder Prize from Ashland, and coeditor of *French Connections: A Gathering of Franco-American Poets*. Her poetry, essays, and reviews appear widely. Gelineau is Associate Director of the Creative Writing Program at Binghamton University and teaches in the MFA program at Wilkes University. She lives on a farm in upstate New York, where she and her husband raise Morgan horses under the Hartland prefix.

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MY FATHER'S SHOES BY PETER SAUNDERS

Provincetown Arts Press is proud to present *My Father's Shoes*, the latest volume in the Provincetown Poets Series, which features first books by poets. Fifty-nine when he wrote his first poems, Peter Saunders is now an inspiring teacher as well as a writer, conducting a poetry workshop for older students, "So You Want to Be a Poet."

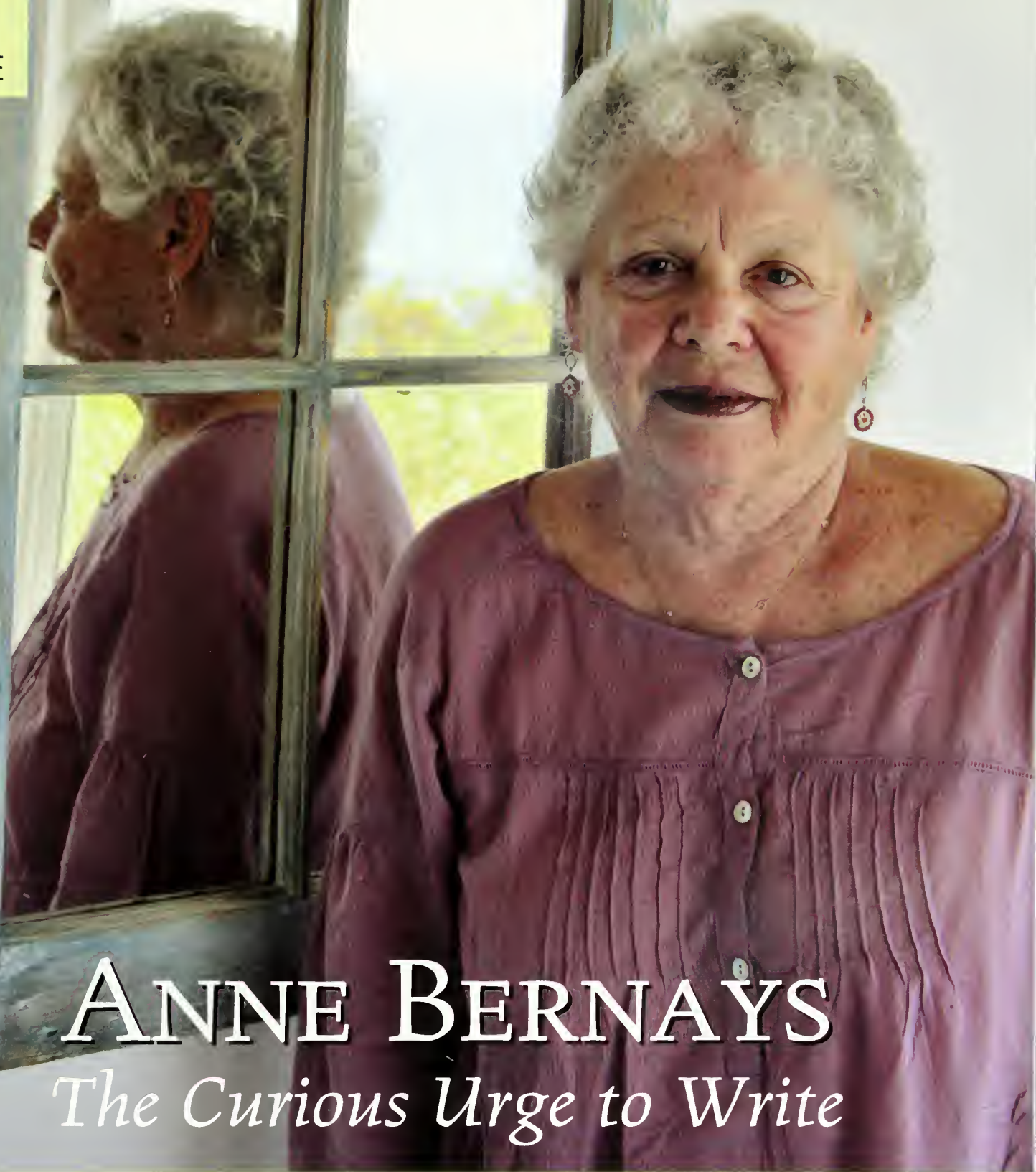
My Father's Shoes illustrates my life and my parents' lives merging back into significance after being ruptured by the Great Depression. My brief time with parents Paul and Katherine . . . six years of love, writing, and art, suppressed for decades, were enough to plant the seeds of what I now am—poet, teacher, writer, embracing my mother and father in death, as I never had the fortitude to possess them in life. . . .

—From the Introduction to *My Father's Shoes*

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—LIZ ROSENBERG

See form on page 164 to order.



ANNE BERNAYS

The Curious Urge to Write

BY DEBORAH MILSTEIN

IN HER ESSAY “Fifty Years in the Bonds of Matrimony,” Anne Bernays says the urge to write “was as mysterious and subterranean as the urge to produce a child had been. Maybe they had something to do with each other, the creative floodgates having been released in a torrent.” New motherhood, and a chance encounter, moved Bernays into a new realm of words. She confesses to a “shameful” impetus: “I met a woman who had been my best friend in middle school and I hadn’t seen her in years. I said, ‘Oh, Eleanor, what are you doing?’ She said, ‘I’m taking a writing class at Columbia.’ I went home and wondered, ‘How come she’s doing that and I’m not?’ I realized *I wanted to do this*. If I hadn’t bumped into her I probably would have done it anyway—yet it started me off.”



(LEFT) GRANDMOTHER ANNA FREUD BERNAYS, c. 1945; (RIGHT) FATHER EDWARD L. BERNAYS, c. 1980

Bernays wrote ten stories that first year, “the words pouring almost, it seemed, unbidden.” She sold one of them, “A Better Place,” which she tells me is “horrible” and “self-conscious”; a pregnant woman, worried about giving birth, wonders how small her cervix is. She holds up two fingers close together. “A whole baby has to come through that, and it freaked me out.”

“Was this before or after you gave birth?” I ask, during the first of several interviews with Bernays, sitting at the kitchen table of her Cambridge house.

“After. I met one of my old boyfriends on the street in New York—he’d always been a terrific do-gooder—and he looked at me and said, ‘What are you doing to make the world a better place?’ I should’ve said, ‘Feed you some poison.’ Oh God, how could I ever have gone out with him?”

She published the story under her married name, “delighted to be Anne Kaplan. But then I thought, ‘Anne Kaplan didn’t write this story, Anne Bernays did.’”

Unexpectedly discovering that one’s name is “the core” of one’s identity, “no matter how much you dote on your husband,” Bernays followed her mother’s example and decided to keep her own name. As a child, she recalls she was embarrassed to introduce her friends to her mother as “Miss Fleischman.” “Isn’t your mother married to your father?” they’d ask when they visited her home.

In 1959 the Kaplan-Bernays family moved from New York to Cambridge, settling into “a large house on a groovy street not far from Harvard’s famous yard,” where first-born Susanna was joined by sisters Hester and Polly. “I had three children in six years, but I was also writing books, I just couldn’t stop,” Bernays says. And she hasn’t stopped; Bernays published a dozen novels over the span of forty-three years.

Her first novel, *Short Pleasures*, was published in 1962, soon followed by *The New York Ride* (1965) and *Prudence, Indeed* (1966). Then came *The First to Know* and *Growing Up Rich* (both published in 1975), followed by *The School Book* (1980), *The Address Book* (1983), and *Professor Romeo* (1989), a *New York Times* notable book of the year. Bernays’s collaborative non-fiction book *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers* (now in its third edition), written with Pamela Painter, was published in 1989, followed by two more collaborative nonfiction works written with Justin Kaplan: *The Language of Names* (1997), another *New York Times* notable book of the year, and *Back Then: Two Literary Lives in 1950s New York* (2002). Bernays’s latest novel, *Trophy House*, was published in 2005. *Trophy House*, set

in Boston and on the Cape, explores shifting relationships and changing neighborhoods. Recently, Bernays completed the manuscript of another novel, *The Man on the Third Floor*, which is currently on offer.

She was in her early thirties when her first novel appeared. Her father, Edward Bernays, the self-proclaimed father of public relations, issued a press release, which made her cringe. “I once had a shrink tell me that my father couldn’t see his children as anything but extensions of himself, so my success would be his success,” she explains. “He was used to sending out news releases about everything—the cat fell in the bathtub, send out a news release! This seemed so not me.”

Edward Bernays wrote *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, published in 1923, the first book to discuss how general sentiment may be shaped. His clients included major automobile and tobacco companies; President Calvin Coolidge gave him a warm endorsement. When her parents were approaching retirement, they asked Bernays to continue the business, and she declined. Her mother was very hurt, but Anne was simply not as absorbed with the spin of public relations as she was with the fabrication of fiction.

Although she was not as well recognized in the Bernays empire, Doris Fleischman worked alongside her husband and helped found their PR firm, actually starting off as his secretary. Doris was a member of the Lucy Stone League, which promoted married women’s use of maiden names. In 1928, when the couple went to get a birth certificate for their first child, also named Doris, the registrar saw their different last names and deemed the baby illegitimate. A year and a half later, Anne—named for her grandmother Anna Freud—was born. (Edward was a nephew of Sigmund Freud—a fact that he eagerly publicized, so much so that he was mocked as a “professional nephew.”)

“There’s a wonderful term, ‘optics,’ how something looks, which seemed all-important to my father,” Bernays recalls. “I sang in a women’s chorus for thirty years and I complained to him that nobody had ever reviewed us, and he said, ‘If nobody reviews you, the concert didn’t happen.’ I just was horrified—was there no point of doing it for the sake of doing it, for itself, for having completed something, for having created something that somebody else might enjoy? Even if only the families of the singers came, I thought it meant something. But as far as my father was concerned, it didn’t happen. I never could square my own feelings about work with his. That’s why I didn’t take over the business. I would’ve been very rich.”

Choosing a writing career, indeed, did cost her. Soon after her first book was published, Bernays was sued for a million dollars by a man with the same uncommon surname as an unsavory fictional character. An expensive lesson to learn: “Never, never, name a character something odd. Name it either something impossible—like Zock—or name it Wilson or Jones, because then you’re not so likely to be sued.” There were only, however, five people in the Manhattan phone book with the last name she used. The judge instructed her to settle out of court, since, he said, if it went to a jury, “juries always find against the writer. They think writers are immoral.”

Nevertheless, Bernays kept writing at a steady pace. Her fourth book, *The First to Know* (1975), is a novel about a novelist. I wondered how much of this character’s experience was her own. Both Bernays and this fictional novelist started writing after age twenty-five: “He’d waited until he was past twenty-five to start writing seriously and the stuff came out as if someone had shaken a bottle of champagne and then pulled the cork.” I read this line to Bernays, who reacts as if she’s never heard it before. “How nice!” she laughs. “It’s vivid.” She agrees that the metaphor is true to her experience as well.

Elsewhere in the novel, the narrator says, “Nowadays, I’m told, a first novel rarely makes more of a splash than peeing into a tidal wave would.” Thirty-five years later, Bernays considers if the difference is decided by marketing and promotion. On occasion a publishing house may be convinced a first novel is going to be a best seller, and they put everything behind it. But nine out of ten first novels don’t get that treatment. Bernays says that “it’s probably just as well because most people who get that

treatment have a terribly hard time writing the second one." It was Bernays's fifth novel, *Growing Up Rich*, which garnered the most press.

Growing Up Rich was awarded the Edward Lewis Wallant Award, which is presented annually to an American writer "whose published creative work of fiction is considered to have significance for the American Jew." Bernays didn't submit the book for the Wallant award and was completely surprised to find out she'd won. In fact, she'd never even heard of the prize, but was pleased to find that "some good people have won it," like Cynthia Ozick for *The Pagan Rabbi* and Chaim Potok for his classic, *The Chosen*.

Still, she didn't consider *Growing Up Rich* a Jewish book; she says she hadn't come to terms with her Jewishness, even then. "I didn't grow up in a Jewish household; I grew up in an aggressively nonreligious, absolutely sectarian, antireligious household. I asked my father, 'What am I?' because people would call me 'Jew' at school. And he said, 'You're nothing, and you can choose when you grow up,' which I think is terrible. It's unspeakable, but he really meant it."

Reading Bernays's books with an eye for it, I began to find a lot of Judaism in her work, as in this delightful passage from *The New York Ride*:

"There's something about Jerry you have to admire. Nerve."

"Chutzpah," I said. "Jewish nerve."

"Jerry's not Jewish," she said.

"I know," I said, "but his nerve is."

Judaism pops up unexpectedly in other novels, too. After Dannie, the heroine of *Trophy House*, first has sex with David, he tells her, out of the blue, that he's Jewish. It's by no means a central moment of the book, but it strikes me as important. "You didn't grow up like this," Bernays tells me, "but I still expect people to talk behind my back or to exclude me because I'm Jewish. That's just the way we grew up. I mean, when we were little, there were hotels that didn't allow Jews. Tell that to anybody nowadays and they say, Really?"

She and Kaplan didn't raise their children with much religion. "We had a Christmas tree when they grew up"—as Bernays's childhood family did—"but little by little, I thought, this is silly." Eventually she began celebrating the Jewish holidays, because she felt she was "ignoring something that drags on me. 'Drags' is a bad word because that's negative. It's like pulling my coat"—she tugs at her shirt—"to remind me that I'm Jewish. I don't believe in God and I'm very secular, but we light candles on Friday night and the Hanukkah candles. I feel the weight of it, not in a bad way but in a good way. I owed them something. A lot of my relatives were killed in the camps, an awful lot. Most of the Freud relatives were. And if very influential people had not worked on his behalf, Sigmund Freud would have been killed also. Several of his sisters went to the camps."

I know she must get this question a lot but I can't resist asking: did she grow up as rich as the heroine of *Growing Up Rich*? "Yes," she says, matter-of-fact. "That wasn't my family in the novel, but, yes, we were enormously rich. I lived in the Hotel Sherry-Netherland for two or three years. When I got up in the morning, I simply left my pajamas on the floor; by the time I got home, my room would have been made, my pajamas picked up. I actually had somebody come into my room in the morning to close the window, because my mother believed in night air. 'Good morning, Miss Anne, it's time to get up.' By the time I got married I'd never bought the ingredients for one meal. The ironic thing about having a lot of help is that you're essentially helpless."

"I was driven to school in a chauffeur-driven Cadillac, and I made the chauffeur let me off a block away so the children wouldn't see me. I was always ashamed of it. In a funny way, I was just as ashamed as if I'd come to school without shoes. But other people love being rich. It's nice to have enough money to get what you want, but it shouldn't be used in the way it's often used."

Raymie, a character in *Trophy House*, laments how Provincetown has changed: "Where have all the artists gone? Where are the playwrights and poets?" Raymie doesn't represent what Bernays thinks; "She isn't me." But Bernays has seen Provincetown change. A few years ago "a lot of very rich people came in, gay and straight as well, and along with them came stores on Commercial Street that you never saw before, stores that sold beautiful antique furniture and elegant Oriental stuff and high-end boutique kinds of things."

A New Yorker at heart, Bernays has for many years summered with Kaplan on Cape Cod. "The wild part, Wellfleet and Truro," she writes, "where the trees and brush are thick and thorny and laced with poison ivy and the seascape is as variable as the weather." They discovered the Cape in 1957, the year their first daughter was born. "My sister had rented with her husband a little converted something from an Army barrack—it barely had running water—on the edge of a pond in the Wellfleet Woods. We spent two weeks and that was the start of it. We've spent every summer on the Cape, except three, since then." She and Kaplan bought land in 1968, built a house in 1973—"I don't know what took us so long"—and, after a storm blew the roof off in 2005, built a new house in 2007.

Bernays has long been involved in the Provincetown arts community. She's taught at and served as chairman of the board of the Fine Arts Work Center. "The students were *very* good," she recalls. "I was there in the summer, the writing Fellows were there in the winter—so I didn't meet too many of them. But I was also on the panel to choose the writers from time to time. I didn't always do well. We turned down Jeffrey Eugenides." (He later won the Pulitzer Prize for *Middlesex*.) "I'm sorry about it now!" Following her tenure at the Work Center, Bernays joined the board of the Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill, eventually becoming copresident. "I've been teaching there for twenty-five years; I *love* the classes. I've had wonderful students at both places."

I was one of her MFA students, so I was amused to come across this line in her memoir about working at the literary magazine *discovery*: "The stories were fresh and smart, not one of them giving off even a whiff of pretension. Few of our writers had gone through MFA programs like Iowa or Virginia, and occasionally you could hear the gears grinding, but you never had the sense that the writer was composing according to a set of rules learned from a master in the classroom." When Bernays was on a panel choosing Fellows for the Work Center, she became perplexed by evidence of education at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, because the stories were so beautifully crafted, and because they all had a similar self-consciousness about writing a story. "When I worked on *discovery*, we got wild stories about people doing bizarre things, such as T. C. Boyle, who was completely his own self. We wanted



ANNE BERNAYS TEACHING AT THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOOL, c. 1980



ANATOLE BROYARD AND ANNE BERNAYS, 1951 PHOTO BY VOSBURGH LYONS

original stories, not cookies from a cutter. On the other hand if you look at some of the really successful writers, they came out of Iowa, including Jane Smiley, John Irving, and Michael Cunningham."

What has changed Bernays's opinions of MFA programs? Programs differ, she says. She thinks highly of the Lesley program, where she teaches; each term, students work with teachers who are very different in their approaches and styles, so there is no cookie-cutter concoction. But in the seventies and eighties, that cookie-cutter imprint of the Iowa Writers' Workshop was very pronounced. "You just *knew*."

"What a writer needs is life and not other writers," she explains. "You don't learn writing from other writers, that is, from living with other writers, you learn what it's all about by trying things that you've never tried before and going places and meeting people and getting lost and taking risks and fucking the wrong man and all that stuff. You don't get it from living in a dorm with other writers. If anyone ever asks me if they should go to an MFA program, I say no, but if you must, go to a low-residency program where you'll be in the world most of the year. It's a hothouse," she says, but agrees that it can grow excellent tomatoes.

"I think the more experience you have the better writer you are. Of course that wasn't true of Jane Austen, but who knows what she would have written—she never went more than twenty miles outside her hometown."

I think Bernays would agree that, along with experience, the more reading you do, the better writer you are. When she dated Anatole Broyard in the early fifties, he gave Bernays a recommended reading list including "D. H. Lawrence and the work of several kinky French writers." Bernays's own recommended reading list is too long to fit here. I asked for five books and got ten: Jane Austen's *Emma* ("Emma is fantastic"); Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*; Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori*; *The Emperor's Last Island* by Julia Blackburn ("a masterpiece"); the short stories of Flannery O'Connor and Salinger; Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* and *A Handful of Dust*; *True Grit*, "a sort of fake Western," by Charles Portis; a novella by Katherine Anne Porter, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, "about the flu epidemic of 1918. Not too many contemporaries."

I ask Bernays what book she last read. "I'm in the middle of *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton. It's my second time through." She recently read *Game Change* because she "loves political gossip."

ON A FRIGID JANUARY MORNING, Anne Bernays wears hot pink socks. We're in the reading room of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism

at Harvard, where Bernays teaches, right across from her Cambridge house on Francis Avenue. I wanted to see Bernays in action and she welcomed me to her fiction class. "But you can't just observe," she tells me. "You're going to have to work." She works, too. "We'll do a little stretching. Let's begin a story. Any humor injected would be much appreciated." We start the class discussing the way to begin a story. One student suggests the word *waiting*, as a prompt to spring from.

For five minutes, seated in upholstered chairs, arranged in a circle, we write quietly. Stories of waiting emerge: waiting for the bus, waiting for a wife to get out of the bathroom, waiting in a doctor's waiting room. Bernays laughs as she riffs off details the scenarios suggest: the joker in the writer's mind, police officers, facial stubble, those horrible johnnies you wear in the doctor's office.

One student is having a hard time with fiction. "He thinks he can't make up stories," Bernays says. "But I think everybody's got it. Little kids have it. And you have it somewhere, and I wonder what the combination to the lock is." She explains that a side of your brain sees things as

story. Tapping in can take some practice, because it's not thought and analysis, but a kind of free association seeking connections.

"Your subconscious is supplying the details. Do you know about alpha states and beta states?" A little, we say; it's the flow, the zone. She elaborates, "It's right under your conscious, not quite unconscious, resting and relaxed. These story-making things are accessible to you. Perhaps they are primitive. It would be interesting to see what part of the brain they come from. Children make up stories—does your little boy make up stories?" she asks a young mother in the group, who nods. "And you know parents often say, 'Don't tell stories,' squeezing that ability out of you."

"Come on," she says, "make it up!"

Bernays walks fast, often wearing red shoes; she loves driving her tiny hybrid Honda Insight. She's five feet, three-and-a-half inches tall. Towering over her in the front hallway of her Cambridge home is a ten-foot-tall Tiffany grandfather clock, which was, she says, a gift for her maternal grandfather, Samuel Fleischman, when he retired from his law firm. The enormous clock looms, a metaphor for her larger-than-life background.

Bernays was educated at the Brearley School in Manhattan, and then spent two years at Wellesley College, which, she says, was "a breeze" after Brearley. "Anything to stop normal human behavior, that's Wellesley," she says with a laugh. "Sorry," she apologizes, knowing I'm an alum. "I went there in the Middle Ages, it was completely different then." After two years Bernays transferred to Barnard College, where her mother had gone. She took exactly one creative writing class in college and worked as the Barnard campus correspondent for the *New York Times*.

After graduating, Bernays wrote some obituaries and press releases for her parents' PR firm, and soon took a job as the assistant to a beauty editor at *Town & Country* magazine, where she wrote copy and nearly burned down the office after accidentally leaving some smoldering cigarette butts in a wastebasket. From *Town & Country*, Bernays moved on to *discovery*, a sophisticated literary magazine edited by Vance Bourjaily. She became managing editor, and then moved on to Pocket Books, working in publicity, writing news releases, newsletters, and jacket-copy blurbs. She lasted three un-stimulating months at Columbia's graduate school in English. At her next position, reading manuscripts at Houghton Mifflin, Bernays "felt like a Dickens character, forced to sit on a stool rubbing blacking into gentlemen's boots from morn till night."

In 1954 Anne Bernays married Justin Kaplan, whom she calls Joe—his legal name is Joseph, but he also goes by Justin. In 1957 they had their first

child, and Bernays began to write fiction. "A friend asked what started me writing," Bernays says, "and I gave them all kinds of fancy reasons, and then I realized after the conversation that I hadn't told the truth." The truth was simple: Bernays liked to tell stories. She believes storytelling is automatic. If you see somebody, you wonder who they are and why they are there. You ask whom they live with, where they went to high school, and whether they have "done anything terrible in the last two days."

After working with words and writers for so long, how did Bernays herself leap into writing nine novels? "I hung out with writers. I liked being around them. I never thought I could do it myself." Her mother wrote boilerplate speeches and pithy news releases for her father's business and later in life published a book of poetry. "But she didn't write at home and wasn't a model. There was no model," Bernays says.

In her youth, she dated Anatole Broyard, who, if not a writing model, "certainly helped form patterns in my brain and focused my taste along his lines. He was a Svengali, an iconoclast, absolutely brilliant. I don't know whether he took me seriously or not, but he certainly felt there was some clay up here"—she touches her head—"to be molded."

Bernays took a single creative writing class at Barnard with a teacher who worked as the fiction editor of one of the top glossy magazines, "an incredibly good editor," Bernays says. After writing a story, "you'd have a conference with her, and she would sit down with the story and say, 'Now I don't want you to answer these questions. I'm only going to *ask* you questions,' and each question she asked opened up a gaping hole in the story." Bernays considers her "the best kind of editor, not saying, 'I don't understand why you did this,' but asking 'Why do you think this person did this?' And you'd say, oh my God, because you know up here, but the reader doesn't."

As a teacher, Bernays follows this model. In class, she prods us with questions to deepen our stories: What's this character's motivation? Would he really say this? What's the symptom that brings her to the doctor's office?

Bernays asks the class, "Have you ever played a musical instrument?" We're struggling with an exercise from *What If?* The idea is to write a story or description using only one adjective and one adverb. "Verbs are your best friends; nouns are your second-best friends. Adjectives and adverbs are your older sister telling you you're stupid." We all crack up and gossip about our older sisters.

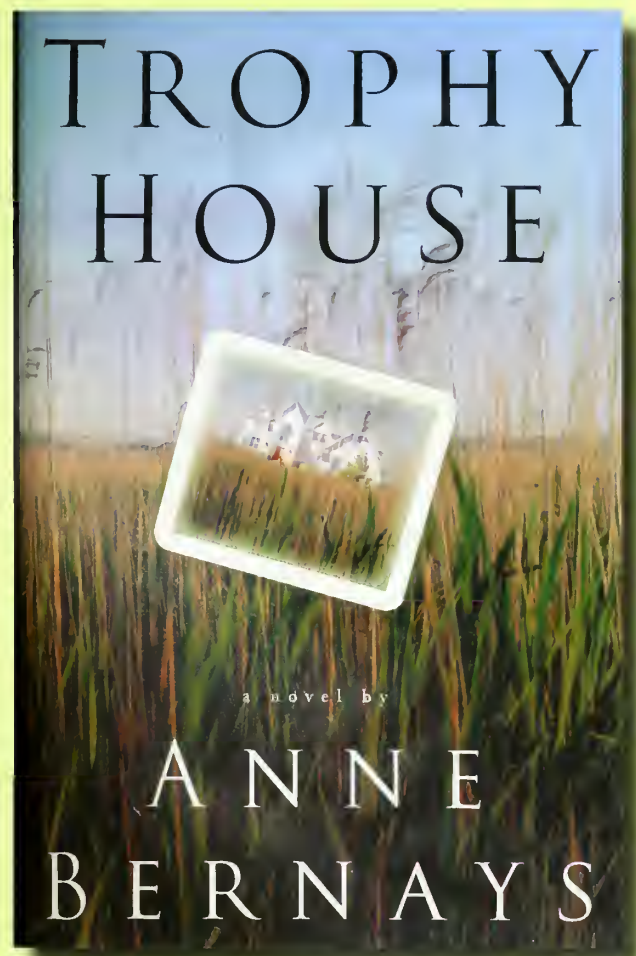
It's not surprising to learn that Bernays sings; musical references often pop up: "It's an ear thing, like when you're singing and know you've hit the right note." Of course, it's hard, she assures us. "The more you practice, the more easily your fingers do what they're supposed to do, so when you get a violinist playing something very fast, it's almost automatic. Doing this kind of thing takes a lot of practice but it gets stuck in your head, like any other muscular exercise. Your muscles learn there's more than one way to go."

This sense of muscularity, of practice, comes up in Bernays's essay "Pupils Glimpse an Idea, Teacher Gets a Gold Star," in the anthology *Writers on Writing*.

There's sureness to good writing even when what's being written about doesn't make all that much sense. Words have muscle and grace, familiarity and surprise. If forced to choose one writer of the twentieth century who has these qualities most abundantly, I would name Vladimir Nabokov, who makes me want to take back everything I said about adjectives, except that each of his is chosen as carefully as an engagement ring. You can't teach that kind of sureness; it comes only after writing every day, sometimes for years.

Bernays learns writing from her reading; it's an ongoing process. In class, she reads to us from a tattered paperback. "This is one of my all-time favorite writers, Graham Greene. I just want to read you the opening of a story, which he does so beautifully. *The End of the Party*—have you ever read this?—is terrifying, and gives me goose pimples."

She reads a few paragraphs of Greene's story. "I don't know how he does it," she says. "The language is *so clean*. You want to know what happens. I think he, along with Nabokov, were the two great writers of the twentieth century. Nabokov gets away with oversalting the stew but it still tastes good. And he can do it, but it's an incredibly hard thing to do, to use a lot of adjectives and adverbs, and just throw them around like seasoning."



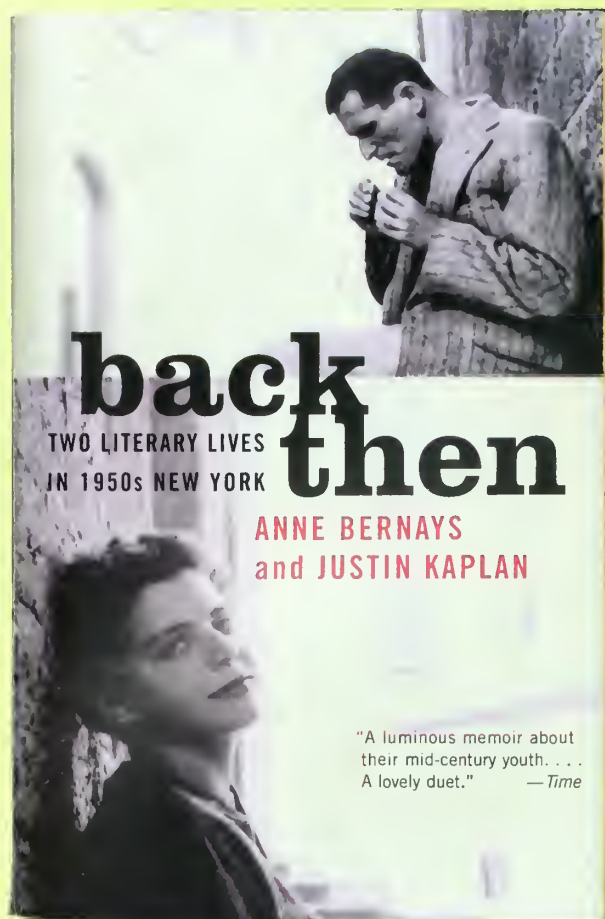
One student in the Nieman fiction class, a writing teacher himself, discusses the novel he's working on, about the navy. "Somebody said the novel is a domestic form," Bernays says, "and I think that's especially true for women—because he's writing a book about the navy but we don't have that experience, most of us, traditionally. We tend to write about the things that we know." Her fictional settings are familiar terrain; many of her novels are set in New York and in the Boston area. Her most recent novel, *Trophy House*, takes place mainly on Cape Cod; "Raymie and I," says the narrator, "are as unlike as Manhattan and Truro."

Bernays's fictional characters work, as the author herself has, in the publishing industry, schools, and universities. Married for over fifty-five years, the mother of three and grandmother of six, Bernays knows family dynamics well—although her novels, inventive and imaginative, set up domestic situations she's never experienced. Her greatest theme is relationship: husbands and wives, parents and children, writers and editors, friends, coworkers, neighbors. She brings her life experience to work—with a whole lot of twists. "Conflict, conflict, conflict," she says in class, "that's story."

Her novels are, indeed, full of conflict and drama, murderers, suicides, philanderers, alcoholics. Bernays says she, luckily, has no real-life experience with this sort of thing, but neither is it entirely imagined. The husband in *Prudence, Indeed*, an emotional tyrant, was based on a brilliant friend of hers. "He drove his wife absolutely nuts, one-upped her in everything that she did. She was working on a children's book, which didn't come off, and he sat down and wrote a children's book, which they published. She kept trying to commit suicide. He was driving his wife crazy and I just thought, what would happen in a marriage like that?"

"It was the height of the women's movement, and a lot of people my age were getting divorced because the husbands couldn't handle their authority being questioned. It was very hard for people who grew up in the thirties and forties to marry and have their marriages survive. Everyone was getting divorced. I had a friend who was a painter, and her husband wouldn't let her put her paintings in the living room. Well, this is astonishing, so why didn't she say, 'Fuck you, I'm going to put the paintings up'? But they got divorced."

Bernays says she's fascinated by this sort of thing. "My mother used



to tell me that she knew two women who had killed their husbands. One pushed him down the stairs. I don't know whether it's true or not, but it was her theory that a lot of that was going on and that it's billed as an accident. But it really isn't. I'm always sort of engaged by horrible stories," Bernays explains, saying she's drawn to them at the same time she's repelled. "But it makes good storytelling."

Bernays's curiosity informs—or perhaps forms—her fiction. In class, she gives assignments to focus our attention on the world around us: List ten things you've never seen before; it will hone your eye for detail. Listen for "overheards," bits of conversation you catch. "You hear the most amazing things when you're on the bus or the subway or you're waiting on a line at the checkout counter," she says. "People are all the time saying really weird things to each other. You'll find that people use wonderful shorthand in talking to each other. They don't use full sentences and they condense things beautifully." Read the newspaper, clip a few articles, write an outline for a story based on the clips. "I wrote my very first novel based on something in the paper."

An informed citizen of the world, Bernays is always up-to-date, reading news of every stripe. "The *Science Times* scares the shit out of you," she exclaims with a laugh. "Jane Brody is always having the most horrible things happen to her legs!" She's a frequent contributor to the *Times* and has had many letters to the editor published. When Sarah Palin's \$150,000 wardrobe scandal broke, Bernays wrote a letter about Patricia Nixon's "good Republican cloth coat." The Checkers speech, Bernays says, "got him saved. He was drowning and it was a lifeline. 'We got this little dog named Checkers, and my wife wears a good Republican cloth coat'—how brilliant! That sneaky bastard. Horrible man. He was smart, though. My mother knew him—he put her on some commission, something to do with the role of women. She was a big feminist."

Bernays certainly considers herself a feminist as well, "but I haven't been so, in my writing and my novels." Despite this assertion, *Prudence, Indeed*, which takes its title from the Declaration of Independence, has been called the first feminist novel. "But I don't like to hammer things home in fiction. I don't like to take a political stance and then just pound on it. I think that's stupid."

A huge theme in *Trophy House* is September 11. "After September 11,"

Bernays tells me, "a lot of writers said, 'I don't think I can write a novel now.' If they were going to write a post-September 11 novel, they'd have to mention it in some way. The same thing happened right after Kennedy was shot; a lot of novels came out in which it figured in some way. I know there were a lot of other books that did exactly the same thing, and much better, so I placed *Trophy House* exactly a year after. The unconscious brings anniversaries up for you, you don't even have to look at the calendar."

While politics pop up occasionally in her fiction—"She began to sing. The sound started far back in her throat and came out with all the sensational assurance of a President-elect emerging after the votes have been counted"—*Trophy House* is, of Bernays's novels, uniquely politically informed. "To me," the narrator says, "Bush 2 was like a doctor you're consulting whom you suddenly suspect never graduated from medical school."

Bernays herself is particularly invested in Bush's legacy of war in Afghanistan. "How do you feel," a student asks in class, "about your grandson being in the Marines?"

"Conflicted!" Bernays says. "I feel very proud of him because that's what he wants to do, and he's done extremely well. He came out eleventh in a class of two-hundred-eighty-something. He picked infantry, which is the most dangerous, and he's a platoon leader, and how can you not be proud of somebody and happy for him that he's doing well in what he wants to do? On the other hand, I'm a pacifist, deeply pacifist, so it's hard. Very scary." But everyday life is scary too: "I know three people, personally, who were killed in car accidents on Route 6 on Cape Cod. So the statistics for Route 6 are almost worse than the statistics for Marines."

When Bernays first started writing, as a new mother, she had a two-page-a-day requirement. How have her habits changed over the years, after publishing nine novels? "Well," she says, "the more time you have the more you waste. I had three children in the space of six years and wrote three novels in those same years, and it then slows down. But my routine has remained pretty much the same, which is to get up early and write in the morning. I've found that after two and a half or three hours I just didn't have any more juice left. Which is not very long. I know some people who can go for hours and hours and hours and hours, and I just can't do it. It's grueling. I can tell when I've had a good morning because I feel tired or washed out."

Bernays has cowritten three nonfiction books, one with Pamela Painter and two with her husband, Justin Kaplan. The collaborative process works because Bernays likes being edited. "If I admire the person I'm working with, that is if I think they're smart and know what they're talking about, I don't mind it. Once I handed Joe a chapter that I'd worked very hard on, that was extremely difficult. He looked at me and said, 'What's this?' But that was as bad as it got. The worst is, 'It's pretty bad,' as if it was just some vomit on the page."

Luckily, she says, she and Kaplan have the same work habits. "Except," she laughs, "he works longer and harder than I do." Their daily routines mesh: "We start working around nine, then break for lunch. He often goes back working after lunch but I stop working then. A lot of people's lives don't dovetail that way, and it's kind of too bad."

Although their schedules complement each other, their writing habits don't. Bernays shows Kaplan her work in progress, chapter by chapter. "I finish a chapter and then I show it to Joe. And then he suggests what it needs and I go back and revise, chapter by chapter. And then of course you have to revise from the beginning when it's all done. You have to do it all over again." Kaplan doesn't show Bernays his work in progress; in fact, "He worked on *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*," his first book, a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winner, for "seven years before ever showing me a word."

I'm curious if Bernays works on more than one project at once. "A few years back I was doing some book reviewing. I had quite a few in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *LA Times*—not the *Boston Globe*, they never asked me, isn't that funny? I would tend to do those while I was working on a longer fiction project, but I wouldn't dream of doing two novels at once. It'd drive you crazy."

"Any novel is a challenge, it's just so hard," she explains. "It gets harder as you learn more about complexity. Plot is fine but you need to fill it in with some kind of emotional density. I tend to write fast, and not in a good way, so that Joe is always saying, 'This is good but open it up, open it up, open it up, take more time.' If I have a scene I tend to zip through it. I lose an awful lot that way, so I'm trying to teach myself to slow down, and

The Man on the Third Floor

Excerpt from a new novel by Anne Bernays

A young man, I guessed to be twenty-seven or twenty-eight, entered briskly. I noticed his face first. He had the look of a swarthy angel, radiating beauty like that in a Renaissance portrait of an Italian noble. His mouth was full and slightly crooked. His eyes were dark, almost black, as if polished. My heart beat rapidly, my chest tightened. I knew I was looking at this man as if he were a woman.

"What can I do for you?" I said. He was wearing dark blue pants, thick-soled shoes, and a thin Eisenhower jacket. He carried a clipboard and pencil.

"I'm supposed to measure your room for

a new carpet."

"Really?" I said. "No one told me."

He consulted his clipboard. "You're Mr. Samson?"

"That's what they tell me."

"This won't take more than a few minutes," he said. "I'll try not to disturb you."

Disturb me? He had disturbed me profoundly. I nodded, meaning nothing, temporizing. I pretended to go back to the manuscript, trying desperately to shake off the effect created by the bent man's back and powerful legs.

"What's your name," I said. I hadn't meant

to say this out loud, but, apparently, I had, because he said "Barry."

"Barry?"

"Barry Rogers." He took from his jacket pocket a large object that turned out to house a length of metal measuring tape on a reel.

I looked again at his black hair, beaky nose, and olive skin. No way was he Rogers, but this was America, land of altered names. If he was aware of my staring at him, Barry Rogers did not let on—he measured, wrote, measured again, wrote again, bending, straightening, doing a dance around the room, in fact, humming, very softly, to himself.

I do think that this book that's now on offer [*The Man on the Third Floor*] is considerably slowed down."

One of Bernays's fictional characters, Alicia Baer in *The Address Book*, shows up again in *Trophy House*, published more than twenty years later. "I liked her," Bernays says, so invited her back. "There's another trick in *The Address Book*, which is she's Alice, Alicia—every one of the characters is a character in *Alice in Wonderland*. It's not obvious. In fact you would have to know both of the books extremely well to pick it up, and it's only a little trick of mine. I just thought I'd have fun with it."

Bernays and Kaplan both write in *Back Then* about their respective experiences in psychoanalysis. It seems that everyone in 1950s New York was in analysis. Bernays writes amusingly of Dr. K, who "pounced on [a casual statement] as if waiting a long time for it, a pig smelling truffles in the forest." At one point, Dr. K tells her, "Do not write; it will interfere with your life as a woman."

I ask if she thinks women had different experiences as writers, and what she thinks now of this comment. "I think I should have gotten up and said, 'I'm outta here!' But I couldn't, I was too young to do that. But he should never have said that—I mean, that's outrageous. Classic Freudian, that's exactly what they thought. I didn't know any better, I was only twenty-two, twenty-three, a baby."

Bernays once reviewed a book by Adrienne Rich "in which she talks about being a woman and how it's impossible to be a really good writer and have a life—you know, a husband and children. I actually reviewed this book for *Harvard Magazine*, for which I was a contributing editor at that point, and I came down on her very hard, because she said in the very beginning of the book that she understood, she could relate to, women who had killed their children. And I thought, this is nuts, this is really crazy."

Bernays's life—and her writing—"wouldn't be the same without my children. For instance, *Growing Up Rich*, I wrote when Susanna was fourteen. I had forgotten what a fourteen-year-old was like, but I made my heroine fourteen and I had a fourteen-year-old right in the house."

In *Back Then*, Bernays writes of herself at parties in her midtwenties: "Shy to the point of paralysis, I mainly looked and listened. . . . I hadn't yet learned how to start a conversation." If you've met Bernays, you know she's chatty, warm, comfortable, and casual. She says she learned how to have a conversation by teaching. "Joe said to me the other day, 'You're a good teacher, you kept things going.' You have to, and as you get older you get braver. But I really was terribly shy. Literally, if I went into a room of people I didn't know, I couldn't talk. And I was very bad at small talk. I still don't like it. It still makes me uncomfortable, so I mostly ask sort of nosy questions. I do—can't help it."

In her writing, as in her conversation, Bernays's tone is matter-of-fact, honest and direct, blunt and funny, no bullshit. She uses vulgarity when necessary, and confesses casually and honestly: "The following is a sampling of the men I dated, considered, and eventually parted from . . . men about

as wholesome as deviled eggs left out beneath a midday sun." She uses understatement to very funny effect: "In Bologna we ate a gourmet lunch in a restaurant someone back home had recommended, telling us that if we failed to eat there we would miss the meal of a lifetime. I ordered half a chicken disguised as poulet Margaret-Rose. It was pretty good."

Always clear and fresh, Bernays tells it like it is, true and to the point, concise and precise. "He's up, she's down; she's harp, he's cymbals; she's silent, he screams." Some words, she writes in her memoir, "like *retarded*, *crippled*, *foreigner*, *spinster*, and *old lady* were never disguised but were allowed to emerge starkly, like naked children at a picnic." In her writing—and in her class—we hear such stark, straight language; "Don't fuck around with the exercise!" she instructs her students. She doesn't shy away from sex scenes, gore, or graphic physical description. Unflinching, Bernays dives right in. At the climax of *Growing Up Rich* is a graphic, stomach-churning scene when the heroine vomits up a rich lunch at Locke-Ober:

The fierce pain in my stomach fists itself and then opens up, disgorging, burning the back of my throat; the tears ooze from my eyes. I strain, pull, and heave, finally feeling the rush of glop upwards, then falling in a pink waterfall into the toilet. . . . I am an up-ended bucket. I feel the perspiration drip down from my armpits and stain my blouse.

Hallmarks and highlights of Bernays's fiction, and her conversation, are her wit, realistic dialogue, and imaginative metaphors—mountains of them, which she uses effortlessly, even in everyday conversation. When I run into her one afternoon in Cambridge, she apologizes for rushing off, wearing her hot pink coat, but has to get home. "The Computer Nerd is coming over—that's how he's listed in the phone book," she says. She's switching from a PC to a Mac, which, she says, is apparently "the Steinway of computers."

Her written metaphors are just as lively and funny: "Outwardly, Serena had everything a woman might envy; inside she was about as lovely as a cow with hoof-and-mouth disease." "She was like a packet of seeds that promises nasturtiums and sends up radishes instead." "Thinking she had married a noble lion, she was discovering that her mate was a one-eared alley cat with dust in his hair and a crimp in his tail."

Metaphor is her trademark, so what's a fitting metaphor for Anne Bernays, with her grey curls, hot pink accessories, and easy peal of laughter? At work in her office, walls painted a lush green, Bernays brings to mind not so much a tree—although, approaching eighty, she's established a sturdy career and deep roots—but a field of wildflowers shifting in the breeze, fresh and youthful, a flash of bright color, a lively surprise each season. A perennial "what if?" rising as she experiences, and teaches, the art of creation.

DEBORAH MILSTEIN is a freelance writer living in Brookline, Massachusetts. Her work has been published in *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art* and *The Best Women's Travel Writing 2010* and is forthcoming in *Harvard Review*. She holds an MFA in creative nonfiction from Lesley University.



Justin Kaplan

The Archeology of Remembered Lives

By Christopher Busa

JUSTIN KAPLAN had no early dream of being a writer. As a boy, he was busy civilizing himself. His father, Tobias, born in Russia, was an orthodox Jew who dreamed of becoming a rabbi, until he immigrated to America, where he prospered as a businessman. By the end of the Depression, his family emerged, Kaplan said, “moderately wealthy.” His immigrant family had become Americans, living on native grounds.

The Kaplans lived in a comfortable apartment on the Upper West Side in New York, where Justin attended the nearby progressive Center School. On snowy days, he sledded in Central Park. At summer baseball games, he lusted after the hot dogs his father forbade. He read the New Testament on the sly. He began to suspect a Puritanical dimension of Judaism in its denial of joy, spontaneity, and tennis. He learned to enjoy quotation guessing games, delighting at the nimbleness of language to dance out of difficulty. He paid attention to aphorisms, epigrams, parables, proverbs, and otherwise pithy utterances. He learned Hebrew. When he was seven, his mother died. When he was on the verge of puberty, his father died. Kaplan came to

picture himself as a “double orphan.” An uncle shepherded him until his older brother, Howard, was old enough to become his legal guardian.

In his memoir *Back Then: Two Lives in 1950s New York*, written in alternating chapters with his wife, Anne Bernays, Kaplan remembers wondering: “What will become of me?”

Indeed this question haunted him for two decades, opening up concerns about identity, lineage, family allegiance, and career accomplishment. The primal example shown by his father’s endurance and success in handling hard times became a model for the son’s perseverance through his own turbulent foreground. Kaplan was mindful that his father had the practical sense to leave his son a confidence-building trust fund. For years, his circumstances embarrassed and emboldened him at once. His skin suffered from acute dermatitis that was soothed by the excitement of a compensatory itch to excel scholastically. He learned about “the difference between no money and a small amount of money compared to the difference between a small amount of money and vast amounts of money.” Mark Twain may have had much more

money than Walt Whitman, but Whitman did have a small amount, and that was all he needed.

Kaplan’s biography *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain* was published in 1966, winning both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. *Walt Whitman: A Life*, published in 1980, also won a National Book Award. His next major inquiry into the era, *Lincoln Steffens: A Biography*, investigated the investigators of corruption. Steffens was called a “muckraker,” a word that is derived from John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, castigating those “who cannot look up to heaven because they are so obsessed with the muck of worldly profit.” But President Theodore Roosevelt said, “The men with the muck-rakes are often indispensable to our well being. They inquire into and publish scandal or allegation of corruption.”

Exploring the historical convulsions of the post-Civil War decades, and the literary efforts to describe them, became Kaplan’s life’s work. Huge transformations were taking place. The railroad became transcontinental; time zones were created to adjust vast distances to a common clock. Frontiers closed. Western territories became states.

The invention of barbed wire kept buffalo out of farm pastures. Steel was forged in spider thread as strong as massive stone, allowing floors and walls to be hung in the sky. At impressive heights, tiny from the street, construction workers appeared to maneuver as securely as insects bobbing on a leaf and as thrillingly as high-wire circus performers. Inventions abounded: the telegraph, typewriter, telephone, mimeograph machine, lightbulb, and camera.

Following his major biographies, Kaplan published a shorter book about those with a vast amount of money: *When the Astors Owned New York: Blue Bloods and Grand Hotels in a Gilded Age* (2006). The fortune amassed by John Jacob Astor was dispersed to his heirs when he died in 1848, and the wealth swelled exponentially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Kaplan details an array of signs and symbols that were displays of luxury, and he reads them with the acumen of an anthropologist and the exactness of a sociological micro-study in the manner of Erving Goffman:

The private palaces of the robber barons of the Gilded Age had outgrown their limits and evolved into the grand hotel, an establishment bigger and grander and more impressive than any private palace: accessible and logical, organized from cellar scullery to roof garden on principles of comfort and display married to efficiency, ingenuity, fanatical attention to detail, technical improvement, and publicity. Combining the functions of marketplace and town square, the hotel lobby, only recently evolved from barroom and parlor, became one of the theaters of modern life.

Now luxury touched everybody. Kaplan quotes Émile Zola's description of the "democratic luxury of department stores," which offers "ordinary people the opportunity to view and touch expensive goods of all sorts without obliging them to buy anything."

Kaplan remembers that his father, drawn to Russia, would read Dostoevsky in his evenings after work, as a way of thinking about Russia. On Justin's twelfth birthday, his father gave him a copy of the latest edition of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. In his introduction, Christopher Morley described the aim of its current editors: "A sort of anthropology; a social history; a diary of the race." Not a single American author was included. When Kaplan went off to Harvard at age fifteen, he took *Bartlett's* with him. It was a gift that would feed his passion for words and their history. He told me that he did not have a "sentimental feeling for the book, but it gave me a lot of fun. I saw that one could learn to be learned without doing a lot of work."

With Anne Bernays, he would coauthor *The Language of Names: What We Call Ourselves and Why It Matters* (1997). In the sense that names consolidate identity, naming is fundamental to language. "Names penetrate the core of our being and are a form of poetry, storytelling, magic, and compressed history," Kaplan and Bernays write. And, as if foretold, Kaplan himself would edit the sixteenth edition of *Bartlett's* (1992). Though *Bartlett's* traditional core of quotations from the Bible and the English poets still abounded, Kaplan included

more film and pop culture references. Setting high standards for politicians, he was criticized harshly for not finding examples of eloquence in Ronald Reagan's speeches. But he found truths in utterances that echoed real insights into our ethos, such as Gore Vidal's observation, "Film is the lingua franca of our time." Kaplan said to me more than once that it was a misconception to say that, when literary people get together, they talk about literature. The truth is rather, the talk is about movies.

The chronological arrangement of *Bartlett's* significant sayings has always served as a strikingly emotional guide to the evolution of Western civilization. Antique wisdom is freshly polished, its youth showing through its age. In the introduction to his edition of *Bartlett's*, Kaplan spoke of "inviting readers to travel over land masses and archeological layers of remembered words." The genius of *Bartlett's* is that its subsequent editions are plotted through continuing time, where small twists of thinking are often noticed in language that becomes vastly popular, signifying a common interest. Often money is involved, and trading between states or countries. Sometimes a marriage between the children of rival countries creates the occasion for some fresh discourse. Kaplan described his efforts as "both intellectual history and cultural montage, a key to past and present taste."

At Harvard, Kaplan majored in English, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in 1946. I was curious why he did not receive a Bachelor of Arts degree, and he told me that Latin was required, and he had not passed his exams. We sat in his high-ceilinged office, lined with books, on the ground floor of his century-old house on Francis Avenue in Cambridge.

I asked, "Given your interest in languages, why did you not zip through Latin?"

"I'll tell you. War broke out when I came to college. I saw that if you were studying premed you were in a better position for an exemption from the draft and in a better position when you finally were drafted. Instead of the Latin I should have been taking, I did horrible work in chemistry and biology courses. Really hideous. I couldn't even look reliably through a microscope. I was a lummo in the chemistry lab. Several years after, I ran into the guy who was running the course on quantitative analysis. He said, 'We could never figure out what you were doing in the laboratory.'"

Kaplan took other "disastrous courses," one of which was calculus. He also took courses in French and Russian literature, in addition to "straight English lit courses." Kaplan said, "I was designing my own curriculum."

Kaplan stayed on at Harvard, remaining in the same room that was his as an undergraduate, and studying with the same professors. He was only vaguely ambitious to earn a PhD. His skin began to itch. He became aware that he had never taken a course in American literature, and finally took one with F. O. Matthiessen. Matthiessen was the author of *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, published in 1941. It examined the rhythms of raw American speech. Walt Whitman wanted his poetry to sound like nobody else's, and it is precisely the lack of linking with tradition that the English poet Matthew Arnold said

marred Whitman's poems: "While you think it is his highest merit that he is so unlike anybody else, to me this seems to be his demerit." Arnold coined the widely used term "touchstone" to situate stepping points in the progress of literature. In my understanding, a touchstone is akin to an annotated essay upon a quotation from *Bartlett's*, a way of remembering consolidated wisdom in the language of the original. Matthiessen established the idea that American literature had its Elizabethan equivalent in the writings of Emerson and Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville, Longfellow and Whitman, and that the idiom of the subsequent generation was born between 1850 and 1855, when Emerson published *Nature*, Thoreau *Walden*, Melville *Moby-Dick*, Hawthorne *The Scarlet Letter*, Longfellow *Hiawatha*, and Whitman *Leaves of Grass*.

Today Matthiessen is widely credited with initiating the proliferation of university programs in American studies. He was a champion of political causes. Writing at a time when America was fighting in Europe, Matthiessen fostered the radical yet patriotic idea that American literature, in its contemporary vitality, rivaled the best that could be thought or said across the Atlantic.

Matthiessen was also discreetly open as a gay man, his romantic relationship said to be an "open secret"; he shared two decades with the painter Russell Cheney, spending summers in Kittery, Maine. When Cheney, much older, died, Matthiessen, a few years later at age forty-eight, committed suicide. Last year Harvard University announced plans to endow a chair called the F. O. Matthiessen Visiting Professorship of Gender and Sexuality.

When he was a student, Kaplan said, "American lit was way, way down on the scale. It existed and was barely acknowledged. Matthiessen woke people up to the fact that American literature was as rich and artful as the English tradition. It was very important: that's what I learned from him."

A tenet of the prevailing New Criticism, in English departments throughout the country at that time, was the rule set by T. S. Eliot that critics are obliged to separate the man who suffers from the mind that creates, and that the biography of the author should play no role in any judgment about the quality of a poem, play, or novel. Kaplan remarked that the New Criticism had not hit Harvard when he was there, but he agreed that "the life, then, was considered to be irrelevant to the work."

How did Kaplan develop a mode of biography in which events in the author's daily life influence the writing? Kaplan said he began to feel a certain kind of "isolation from, let's say, real life." He was bored with late evening discussions with his friends, most of whom were graduate students. They liked to drink glasses of pink gin, he remembered. The concoction was inspired by the British Navy's discovery that Angostura bitters, splashed

into spirits, cured malaria. During World War II, the patriotic cocktail spread to America, where Kaplan's crowd referred to it as "gin and angst."

He became annoyed when the topic of conversation turned to Milton and the problem of evil. Everybody erupted with authoritative opinions, but Kaplan found the talk embarrassing. People knew theory, he said, but they did not know what the theory applied to. Kaplan complained to Matthiessen that he was suffering from intellectual claustrophobia; Matthiessen said, "You need a break," and suggested Taos or Santa Fe. Kaplan lit out for a small ranch with horses and a motel. He mucked out stables. Using a pickaxe, he aerated and loosened a patch of poor soil, mixed in compost and planted chili peppers. Kaplan said he may never again have tasted a pepper so delicious. The dry, high climate in New Mexico was good for his skin. One day, he walked into a bar, thirsty after a day's work. He sat down, dusted off his clothes, and drank beer. When he got up to go to the bathroom, two men followed him. Kaplan turned around; they asked, "Where did you go to school?" Kaplan told them he went to Harvard, and one guy said, "I just won five dollars." "Going west was important to me," Kaplan said, "more important than my first trip to Europe. I no longer felt like an ignorant Easterner—not that I'd really learned anything. Except that I'd absorbed the ambience and general unstuffiness of the West, as compared to the prissiness of the East."

Here we have an instance of the Easterner embracing the frontier and future of his country. When Mark Twain went west from Hannibal to a California mining camp, he heard the jumping frog story, which he immortalized in his short story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." In the story, a sophisticated Easterner, who comes across as ignorant of the West, wins a bet with a local hustler. Twain's essay "How to Tell a Story" details his secrets of storytelling. For example, a speaker who wants to know something attracts attention. (Twain loved to adopt the voice of the straight man.) His famous story about the jumping frog depended on the deception of the Easterner, outwitting the wise guy from the West. Surreptitiously, the Easterner stuffed the mouth of the champion frog with buckshot, filling its jowls, and making it appear almost inebriated. Unable to jump, the champion frog lost to an ordinary frog.

Kaplan experienced the effects of Twain's oratory firsthand when he took Anne, who was

pregnant with their first child, Susanna, to a performance by Hal Holbrook, doing his hilarious impersonations of Mark Twain. Puffing on a cigar in his white suit, sending secret smoke signals into the painted ultramarine atmosphere above, Holbrook's pauses evoked Twain's ability to suspend time on the stage. This evening, Holbrook narrated the story of the "Golden Arm." An elderly couple suffers a misfortune when the wife's arm is chopped off in a farm accident. Surgically, her lost arm is replaced with a "golden arm," and the couple is happy until the wife dies, shortly after, of old age. Bills begin to burden the widower; he digs up his wife's body, violently breaks off the golden arm, and becomes haunted by the voice of the wind, which, when it howls, says, "Who's got my golden arm?" In Hal Holbrook's rendition, the elongation of syllables imitates the howl of the wind, engaging the listener in crypto-hypnotic induction. The arms of a few people in the audience felt an urge to elevate, involuntarily. With his punch line, which Mark Twain called a "snapper" or "nub," Holbrook pointed directly at Bernays and bellowed, "You've got it!" "He nearly brought on our baby," Kaplan said. "The story creates a crescendo, it really builds up. And then the pointing at Annie—scary!"

IN 1945, when Kaplan returned to Harvard from his travels in the West, he was more or less asked to leave until his incompletes and language exams were completed. Kaplan decided to slump out of graduate school and jump to New York, where he began his long foreground as an editor. He had a series of low-paying, highly educational, freelance projects. His personal life may be measured by comparing the number of his girlfriends with the number of his psychoanalysts. Kaplan mentioned to me that he spent most of his inheritance on psychiatrists. I didn't exactly believe him, but I understood the point of his emphasis. In identifying his own psychic conflicts, he would better understand the warring tensions in the authors he wrote about. Freud himself said he learned to understand unconscious drives by reading the work of poets and philosophers.

Kaplan, too, was beginning to understand unconscious drives. With Whitman, he saw sudden transformation after a lengthy preparation. Twain, performing professionally as a "humorist" across the country, became as adept a speaker as a writer. A lot of humor seems to depend on confusion, where things could be taken either way.

Kaplan was belatedly becoming aware of his own ability to write. Before he came to work for Simon & Schuster, he published an "unfortunate anthology" with Dodd, Mead. It was called *With Malice Toward Women: A Handbook for Women-Haters* *Drawn from the Best*

Minds of All Time, a gathering of tart barbs attributed to diverse sources, from the Church fathers to D. H. Lawrence. It was his first book, which he has since tried to disown. In his introduction, Kaplan seemed unaware he was offering readers a book of satire. Kaplan was apprehensive about the response of his girlfriend, Lucy Thomas, a researcher at *Time*, who was supportive. "She sat with me and coached me and encouraged me to go through various sentences and paragraphs. She made me teach myself how to write." She had also spent summers studying painting with Xavier Gonzales in Truro, where the Kaplans would eventually spend their summers.

At the time, Anne and Justin "both had the same guru," the editor in chief of Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster aiming at a paperback market for quality books. Kaplan was asked to edit and introduce a selection of Plato's Dialogues. Plato was Socrates' biographer, Kaplan came to realize. Eight years later, for Pocket Books, Kaplan produced a companion volume on Aristotle, with selections from translations by W. D. Ross. In his introduction, Kaplan described Aristotle, the son of a doctor, as possessing "directness of thought; astounding nimbleness of analysis and reasoning; a dedication to tracing things from their beginnings; a system that embraced, and attempted to unify, both science and philosophy."

Kaplan was attempting to unify his own life. In *Back Then*, he tells a marvelous story of his first visit to one doctor. Kaplan arrived late. His therapist was impatient to get down to business, bluntly asking, "When is the last time you had sex with a woman?" Kaplan said, "About a half hour ago! That's why I'm late!" Abruptly the session ended. A week later, Kaplan received a bill.

Another one of his therapists, Kaplan learned later, wrote an article, "Walt Whitman: A Study in Sublimation," which made him feel ashamed for his therapist because his commentary was such a pedestrian analysis of the poems and pitifully clumsy reduction of Whitman's character.

Another choice therapy session ended with a post-Socratic utterance from Kaplan. Kaplan had learned something of the art of questioning from Socrates. From Aristotle, he discovered where the edge of mystery is reached, where doubt and puzzlement become manifest, the concept in argument of "aporia," as when someone raises an issue without a solution. Kaplan had been seeing a doctor who had misunderstood the intent of Freud's more conversational "talking cure," so that every time Kaplan asked a question, the doctor, instead of conversing, asked why the question was asked. Their final session took place after they found themselves sitting next to each other at a counter of the corner coffee shop. They both had time to kill before the appointment. They concentrated on the clicks of their spoons as they stirred their coffee. In the office, the session began silently. When Kaplan uttered a remark, he was asked why he said what he said. At the end, Kaplan thanked the doctor. He said he realized he was cured and was about to marry Anne Bernays, believing that an ongoing conversation with a novelist was an excellent way for a nonfiction writer to stay balanced. Kaplan could not resist a parting shot at his therapist.



THE WEDDING OF JUSTIN KAPLAN AND ANNE BERNAYS, JULY 29, 1954
(LEFT TO RIGHT) RICHARD HELD, DORIS BERNAYS HELD, JUSTIN KAPLAN, ANNE BERNAYS, EDWARD BERNAYS, DORIS FLEISCHMAN, HOWARD KAPLAN

Exiting the door, Kaplan mentioned, “My fiancée is Sigmund Freud’s grandniece.”

Indeed, Anne Bernays’s father, Edward Bernays, was a double nephew of Sigmund Freud. His father’s sister, Martha, was married to Freud, and his mother was Freud’s sister, Anna. He is also credited as one of the founders of modern public relations and is associated with several financiers, including Bernard Baruch, who used the weight of money to balance political power in a concerted synthesis of government and business. Often issues raised in novels by Anne Bernays pivot on questions of wealth, class, and small distinctions of enormous social importance. If Bernays’s style is brisker and less oblique in its delineations of cultivated intimacies, her themes recall the upper-class agonies so tellingly evoked by Henry James.

When the couple was courting, Anne said that Justin was “pathologically shy.” Novelists exaggerate for dramatic emphasis, and touch directly sensitive nodal points. Bernays is the author of a collection of fiction prompts with Pamela Painter, *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers* (1990), in which the very invention that Kaplan avoids in his biographical writing, his wife encourages in writing fiction. When they met, Kaplan was editing a book on art for Harry Abrams, an enterprising new publisher of contemporary art books. Kaplan worked with the great Meyer Schapiro, who taught a course in art history at Columbia that attracted the attention of the first generation of Abstract Expressionists, including Robert Motherwell. Schapiro was preparing a book on Van Gogh for Abrams, and Kaplan was his editor. Schapiro, a fluent and mesmerizing lecturer, was somewhat tongue-tied as a writer, but Kaplan induced his insights to enfold in a calm and orderly way by asking, “Please write for me.”

Anne was herself trying to persuade her reticent suitor to be more demonstrative. She suggested they visit the Metropolitan Museum. Justin gazed intently at paintings, making no comments. Anne asked, “What are your enthusiasms?” They both cracked up. Even today, when they share a silence together, the unspoken question reminds them of why they are married.

Several months after they began dating, Justin planned a dinner at his downtown apartment. He bought a matching set of china, new silverware to replace his mismatched set, and Irish linens for the napkins and tablecloth. For the dinner itself, he engaged the skills of his family cook, who prepared a spicy shrimp dish, followed by a sweet dessert. He bought fresh candles and invited two other couples to join them, including the art historian Sam Hunter and his future wife Edys. While Justin fussed, Anne began inspecting items displayed on shelves. She went into the kitchen and retrieved some paper towels and a bottle of vinegar. While the guests talked, she polished the antique statue of a small bronze horse, removing its two-thousand-year-old patina. Kaplan had purchased it on a trip to Rome before they were married. It was Etruscan, precious and rare. When the Romans raided Tuscany, they took thousands of the bronze and gold-gilt sculptures that celebrated Etruscan life—crouching lions and the twist of a supple thigh. The Romans melted the artifacts into coins

to finance another war. When Anne Bernays polished away the accumulated patina, the spirit of the artist sprang to life. Anne made Justin smile through his grimace. He never said a word about her casual obliteration of several thousand prized years until well into their marriage.

They married in June, after a romance that had begun the previous fall. His brother Howard, to whom he would dedicate his biography of Whitman, was best man. Until he met Anne, Justin—handsome with a chiseled jaw—had dated many women. He almost married the stepdaughter of Max Schuster, one of the partners of the publishing house Simon & Schuster. His gracious boss came to his wedding and fostered his career as a senior editor at the publishing house, where he worked with Bertrand Russell, Will Durant, and Nikos Kazantzakis. A few years earlier, Kaplan had assisted Louis Untermeyer in preparing his edition of Whitman’s prose and poetry. Untermeyer praised Kaplan as a “demon researcher.” I wondered why Kaplan did his first book on Mark Twain rather than Whitman, whose work he was absorbing well before he encountered Twain.

“I’ll tell you why,” he said. “I spent nearly a year working with Untermeyer on this Whitman material, and together we wrote a biographical introduction. What puzzled and made me unsatisfied was how unsatisfactory the pattern of Whitman’s life is, dramatically. If you are interested in biography as a matter of storytelling, it’s a terrible story. You follow this young genius who publishes *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 and spends the rest of his life, not only improving the book, but attracting worshippers. By the time he’s dead, he’s practically invisible. You don’t want a story about somebody who disappears.”

In the original publication of his poem “Song of Myself,” Whitman predicted his future disappearance: “These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original with me, / If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing, / If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are nothing, / If they are not just as close as they are distant they are nothing.”

Kaplan could not write a biography in which his subject disappears into the adulation of his followers. He wrote several other books before he realized that the solution was not to begin at the beginning, but to begin at the end, reversing the conventional pattern. Kaplan’s Whitman constantly keeps appearing more and more clearly. The biography begins with Whitman in old age, finally living in the first house he ever owned. His friends also raised funds for the poet to purchase a summer retreat, but Whitman diverted the money into the construction of his own granite mausoleum, tucked into the side of a hill in nearby Harleigh Cemetery. (Anne’s father had a more cynical view of these gifts. When he learned that her husband was writing a biography of Walt Whitman, he inquired pointedly, “How can Justin be writing about that man, a loafer and a deviant? He did work for a salary once in a while, but he was shrewdly dependent on the kindness of his friends.”)

Whitman’s tomb is much more imposing than his modest row house, now restored as a museum.



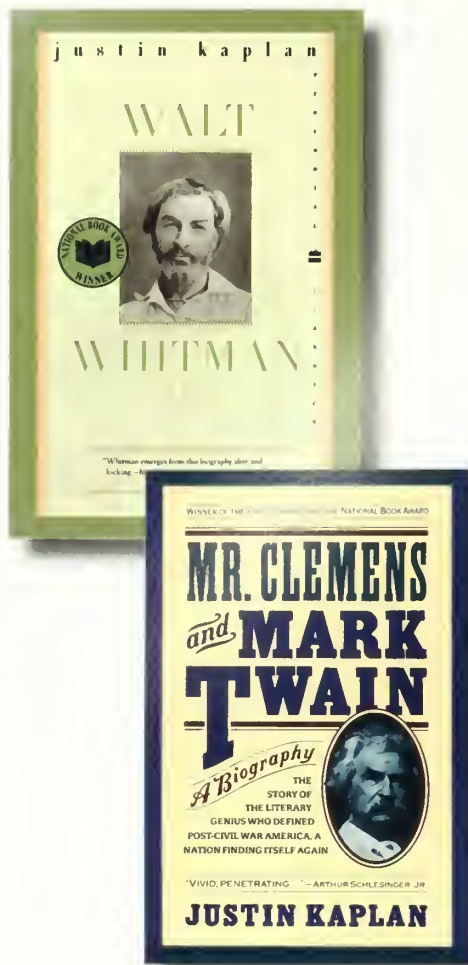
JUSTIN KAPLAN, c. 1990

The first paragraph of Kaplan’s book identifies the city of Camden as “unlovely.” It was not so in Whitman’s time, when it was a riverside suburb as attractive as parts of Brooklyn. Now, as Kaplan remembered with some repugnance of historical grime, the main motor traffic on the streets of Camden consists of vans transporting prisoners from one holding pen to another. Whitman’s house on Mickle Street is across from a new federal facility.

The fate of the poor souls parading today before Whitman’s house may not be as organized as the poet who locked his bedroom door each night. Emerson and Whitman, one evening, walked together across Boston Common arguing over whether Whitman should include his Calamus poems in his final edition of *Leaves of Grass*. It was snowy. They were headed to a restaurant. Emerson pleaded for the decorum that guided Matthew Arnold, urging Whitman not to include poems that seem so overtly sexual. When I saw how Kaplan had evoked the scene of this casual stroll, I realized why Emerson, while a graduate student at Harvard Divinity School, said, “Life is wasted in the unnecessary preparation of finding what is the true way, and we die just as we enter it.”

Kaplan’s friend, biographer Robert Richardson, author most recently of *First We Read, Then We Write: Emerson on the Creative Process* (2009), has also stressed how today’s “biographers have learned from fiction how to tell stories rather than analyze things.”

Historically, the novel began as a mock biography—the “adventures” of a Robinson Crusoe or a Moll Flanders were purported to be true if you suspended your disbelief and elevated your hope. Perhaps the reader was interested in what would happen if a more daring life could be imagined. The early novel was also connected to the fate of orphans, who seemed free of their biological birth to enter new strata of society. Kaplan’s fundamental interest is in how the outsider becomes



an insider. In Emerson, Kaplan found his American Aristotle. Here is the syllogism that became the transcendental scripture for immigrants from abroad to claim possession. Emerson argued: "Words are signs of natural facts. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts. Nature is the symbol of spirit."

Working with Untermeyer, Kaplan wrote "A Note on Whitman and a Horse-Car Named Desire." I asked him about that impish avenue into faux scholarship. He said, "The whole point of this hoax was that one of the drivers of this Washington streetcar was his putative lover Peter Doyle. And I could prove it by the numbers given to the cars themselves. The research was a great way to waste time. The point was to illuminate some cryptic entries in Whitman's notebooks, such as 'Pursue number 18 no further.' There were other references to numbers 25 and 26, referring to the number of the streetcar." Untermeyer was not amused by this probe into privacy. However, when Kaplan published his biography of Whitman, there were critics like Martin Duberman who felt Kaplan "avoided" or "evaded" some final declaration about Whitman's sexuality.

IN HIS CAMBRIDGE OFFICE, sitting on his desk while we talked, was the Etruscan statue that Anne had polished. Now it was regaining its mossy, green tint. Beside the running horse was a fountain that Anne had given him, with a stream that flowed over some small, egg-shaped stones. The pump was not turned on, but the patience of the stone was palpable.

I asked Kaplan, "How did you get the confidence

to go from an employee of Max Schuster, the co-founder, with Richard Simon, of Simon & Schuster, to leave a career in publishing and go off to write your biography of Mark Twain?"

"I did not want to leave the publishing world," Kaplan said. "But there were more exciting things to be done—writing my own stuff. I was insanely proud of being a steady fielder at Simon & Schuster. At the same time, I began to get very depressed, because I was not really doing a good job. The decision to leave and write my book was extraordinarily painful. The man I worked for and truly adored felt betrayed. We still kept in touch. When he read the manuscript, he sent me a telegram saying I would win the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. This was before what he said was true. What a generous and forgiving deed."

When Schuster hired Kaplan, it was after years of Kaplan seeking jobs with Schuster's letter of recommendation. Other publishers wondered, if Schuster thought Kaplan was so good, why didn't he hire him himself? When Schuster finally hired Kaplan, he left a note on his desk, which Kaplan read his first morning at work: "I greet you at the beginning of a creative adventure." Kaplan and Schuster had been talking about Whitman for years. Schuster's note was a deliberate reference to Emerson's letter to Whitman, on the occasion of his reading the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Emerson wrote to Whitman: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start." Schuster placed great faith in Kaplan.

What Kaplan learned from therapy and his own challenging self-exploration helped him write biographies of the psychic life of writers. He said his own struggles "opened up basic notions that stayed with me, especially the idea of eternal conflicts. When you make a decision, which could go forty-nine to fifty-one, either way, ambivalence is evident. Most decisions and most actions are ambivalent, one way or another. That, and the sense of unconscious motivation—that's what drives me."

The psychological issues with Whitman were vastly different from those with Twain. Kaplan explored Whitman quite keenly, touching on all the dimensions in his life that are glimpsed in the writing. For example, Kaplan gives us a picture of Whitman in the early 1860s, the rising poet and opera-lover, working as the editor of a Brooklyn newspaper and taking the ferry into New York in the early evening to meet his friends at Pfaffs, an underground watering hole on Broadway in Lower Manhattan, with an angled glass skylight allowing savored moments of brilliant comprehension from the poets, journalists, public speakers, and actresses sequestered in dining rooms below. Busy feet moved like a river down the boulevard. Pfaffs attracted the most famous bohemians of the day. So our picture of Pfaffs comes from an unfinished poem in Whitman's notebook: "The vault at Pfaffs where the drinkers and laughers meet to eat and drink and carouse / While on the walk immediately overhead pass the myriad feet of Broadway / As the dead in their graves are underfoot hidden / And the living pass over them, recking not of them, / Laugh on laughers! / Drink on drinkers! Bandy the jest! /

Toss the theme from one to another! / Beam up—Brighten up, bright eyes of beautiful young men! Raise your voice!"

With the hurry of twilight scurrying above, Whitman below was a voice speaking under the boot-soles of his readers, just as he predicted in one of his poems. Around a large table in the beer cellar, thirty people could squeeze and jostle. Often, evenings were presided over by Henry Clapp, editor of the *Saturday Press*, which published the "jumping frog" story that launched Mark Twain's career. There were a few smaller outlying tables, where Whitman preferred to sit, observing more than holding forth. "It took hard work and merit to have a full membership," Whitman said of Pfaffs. "The top lights recognized themselves, and made a bit of an inside clique." Unlike many of the "laughers and drinkers," Whitman ate and drank in moderation. Once William Dean Howells visited New York and spent an evening in the beer cellar: "Nothing of their talk remains with me, but the impression remains that it was not so good talk as I had heard in Boston."

But who could talk better than Mark Twain, who spoke in the tongues of outsiders. Consider the first chapter of the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Huck, the narrator, alludes to a previous novel about Huck's friend, Tom Sawyer. Huck concedes that the earlier book was "made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I have never seen anybody but lied, one time or another." In Twain's ghostly negative ability, the persona of Samuel Clemens becomes the medium voicing deceptions and secrets. Willful misrepresentations mingle in a manner where the character of the speaker must be attended to. Twain, in his essay "How to Tell a Story," said, "The humorous story is told gravely; the teller does his best to conceal the fact that he even dimly suspects that there is something funny about it."

To the Widow Douglas, Huck pleads his honest reasons for wanting to leave this constriction of civilization: "The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out."

With its very title, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*, the issue of a divided self becomes manifest. Today, Kaplan feels the choice of his title was a "mistake." The division was "too crude." But his writing is everywhere supple and subtle, illuminating people "whose lives possess mysteries that are not going to be resolved." Sometimes Kaplan reads passages from his book on Twain: "I dip into it with a twinge of terror. I wonder why this writer I'm reading is in such a hurry. Why is he over-packing his sentences? Why does he use words that echo here and there? I kept rewriting and realizing where I was wrong, and why I was so nervous and formal and stiff. In writing about Mark Twain you are going to writing school with a very great writer. You're constantly learning prose from a master. You wish you could do it over again, better."

CHRISTOPHER BUSA is editor of Provincetown Arts.

ROLLING WITH JOHN WATERS

The Filmmaker Talks Unorthodox Role Models in a New Book and Interview

BY ANN WOOD

IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT, FEBRUARY 5, 2010, AND JOHN WATERS IS GOING OUT DRINKING.

Earlier in the day, the National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning, imploring people in the Baltimore area to stay off the road.

"This extremely dangerous storm is expected to produce record snowfall," the *Baltimore Sun* reports, quoting the weather service. "Travel conditions . . . will be extremely hazardous and life threatening."

Children have been sent home early from school, airlines have cancelled their flights, and Marylanders have raided stores, stocking up on salt and shovels, food and beer. But Waters refuses to stay home. In his new book, *Role Models* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), he writes about the Baltimore bars that inspire him.

Every Friday night of my life I drink. An alcoholic one night of the week, a workaholic the other six. My shrink had even agreed that seemed like a good plan for me. Only I'm better these days. Now I don't work *either* day of the weekend unless I have a speaking engagement. And I still only drink too much on Fridays. "Was it fun making your movies?" people always ask. "No!" I respond. "Fun" is being home in Baltimore and going out to scary bars."

While society locks itself away, Waters unlatches his front door and steps out into the storm. When recounting the story a week later, sitting safely in his Baltimore living room, surrounded by a Lizzie Borden memorial, piles of books, a Unabomber birdhouse and other buildings of destruction, he admits to one weather-related concession; he takes the bus.

"I've never taken the bus here in my life, not for thirty years. They're not great. [There] was just one older black lady on it and a bus driver and he drove too fast. I had to be careful [not to say anything]—you know it *was* a blizzard, and I don't know where the buses even go.

"So I said to him, 'Well, where does this bus [go]? Does it go below North Avenue?' where I was going, and he said, 'Where are you going?' And I said 'Club Charles.' And he said, 'You're going to a club?' And I said, 'Yeah.' And he said, 'Something is the matter with you.' And he said it *meanly*. I thought, 'I'm getting dissed by the bus driver for going out?'"

What this bus driver doesn't know is that



Waters meets some of his best characters in local bars. That's where he found Lady Zorro, whom he writes about in the chapter entitled "Baltimore Heroes":

[Zorro was a] lesbian stripper from Baltimore's notorious red light district The Block, whom Divine and I used to go see at the very end of her burlesque career in the sixties. Zorro was so butch, so scary, so Johnny Cash. No actual stripping for her at that point; she just came out and snarled at her fans, "What the fuck are you looking at?" To this day Zorro is my inspiration. She gave me courage to go onstage with no props for my spoken word act. Brave. Without makeup. Like Tilda Swinton at the Oscars.

Waters describes to me his sense of shock when he finds a 2001 obituary for Sheila Alberta Bowater, aka Lady Zorro. It wasn't because he'd found out her real name, or because she had died, but because, as he says in his book, she did something "*way* ahead of her time. This lesbian

stripper got pregnant and wanted to have the child." He needed to find out more about his stripper hero for *Role Models*, so he flew to Tigard, Oregon, to interview her daughter, Eileen.

Eileen's first memories? "The racket of drunk people coming downstairs after [Mom's] work, the loudness of their voices, the smell of marijuana, the smell of alcohol."

Eileen recalls the job title I have heard many times in Baltimore: the "hey girl," who waits on illegal gamblers at a clandestine den. As in "Hey, girl, bring me a beer!" "I served drinks and they would throw quarters in a big box, then dollars, then later in the night it was tens and twenties. . . .

Rather than play with Barbie dolls I had a little joint-rolling machine. I rolled a mean joint. My mother's friends thought it was funny. I started to drive then, too." "What? You drove at eleven years old?" Yep, Zorro "had a Lincoln Continental then and I used to pick her up at the bar because I was worried about her drinking and driving. She was an obnoxious mean-spirited drunk; she would pick fights with anyone. Men, women—she'd kick their ass!"

As he recounts this story, he talks softly; he looks almost disturbed. But it's John Waters, so there's a bright side.

"She meant well," Waters says about Zorro, adding that while most people would have wanted the child taken away from her mother, Eileen ended up okay. She got straight As in school, and now lives a regular life as a regular mother in the Pacific Northwest. "With Zorro's daughter I said, 'Did you ever find this funny?' and she said, 'No!,' but she said, 'Until you called and I put it sort of in this different way of trying to remember it all.' But then at the end she wants the tapes [on which the story of Zorro was recorded] for her kids, which I found amazing."

THE SNOW PILES UP as Waters heads inside the bar—which, as he writes in *Role Models*, was called the Wigwam back when it was owned by a tough woman called Esther and inhabited by "alcoholics, mental patients, and vets." Now called Club Charles, he tells me the hipster hangout is "past its prime," but it is here that Waters meets a non-racist skinhead friend and his girlfriend.

"[He was the] only person I could text, especially when I said 'I'm on the bus,'" Waters says, and then laughs. "So they met me there and

we [had a couple drinks]. Then, after that, the Club Charles closed because it was a blizzard."

From there the group hops another bus to a punk rock club called the Ottobar, but not before Waters manages to "pick up" a boy. He suddenly interrupts himself.

"No, I didn't pick [him] up. That sounds, like, sexual. I met this cute kid and I said, 'Come with us!' He was talking to us and he [had to text his] girlfriend. He just went to the corner to get something to drink or something and he was gone for the whole night."

The foursome hangs out at the Ottobar until closing, and afterwards Waters is left to fend for himself.

"And then they all could walk home, so I just stood there and hitchhiked by myself at . . . one in the morning, in a full white out blizzard. And I had this whole hat on," Waters indicates that his face was also covered. "You couldn't even tell it was me; sometimes that helps [if I'm recognized]. Finally a cab picked me up with another patron already in it, a crazy punk rock girl in the front seat. I know where they were going—they never would have made it. The car was spinning around and he was going, 'Hahahahaha,' laughing and stuff. That was a fun night. I'm up for adventures still."

MONTHS EARLIER, in preparation for his book, John Waters pulls up in front of outsider pornographer Bobby Garcia's run-down home in the California desert. He's embarrassed about his rental car—he's been upgraded to a Mercedes but prefers

his own plain Buick. While on some level he must realize that meeting the man who, as he says in the book, "is obsessed by male Marines and has been chasing, filming, and having sex with them for the last thirty years" will be an adventure—especially since Garcia was so difficult to locate—little does he know what he's about to encounter.

As he exits the Mercedes, a bunch of snarling dogs startle him when they jump upon the chain-link fence that surrounds the house before being called off by their master. But that's nothing. Waters hears the story he came for: Garcia is talking about moving to Oceanside, California, to be near the thousands of Marines at Camp Pendleton, many of whom he lures back to his place with promises of beer. Even though he's always wanted to talk to this "great artist," Waters writes that he gets distracted.

As we sit down and I get out my tape recorder, I look up in alarm at a giant rooster (one of two) who is one of Bobby's roommates. I soon realize this is not Bobby's house—it's his Noah's Ark! "I live with eleven dogs, two pigs, two roosters, and more than five hundred rats—one thousand, or two thousand—who cares?" he announces happily. I suddenly actually feel some sort of critters moving under the newspaper covering the kitchen floor. Good God.

The more the pig grunts and the rooster eyes me with pent-up rage, the more antsy I get. Bobby takes me into the bedroom where his tapes are kept, but there's no light and

I keep hearing scampering noises of God knows what, so I suggest, "for sound purposes on the tape recorder," we sit in the car to continue the interview.

Waters explains to me that "the pornographers, they are outsider artists. I mean most pornographers, what I found out, can only get off on their own pornography. That is really rare," he says. "Directors never say they watch their own work, no matter if it's *Avatar*'s director. Nobody says they watch their own work again."

In *Role Models*, he and Garcia talk about the scariest Marine ("Keith, the psycho drunk who locks the front door of the bedroom in the middle of his scene so Bobby can't get out.") and a favorite Marine ("The Johnny Knoxville look-alike . . . the cutest porn star in the world."). Garcia then begins on his favorite film, *The Hours*, based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about three depressed women by Michael Cunningham, a friend of Waters. "The fact is, I was so shocked when Bobby said *The Hours*," Waters says, and writes, "Just imagine the thrill of telling Michael about his newest fan."

JOHN WATERS IS SITTING on a red velvet sofa in his living room talking about his book, his life. Standing near him is an about three-foot-tall doll that looks suspiciously like the son of "Chucky" from the horror movie, and Waters exclaims that that's who it is, and that he himself was in *The Seed of Chucky*. Sitting in a nearby chair is Waters's fake hideous baby Bill, whom he had made to pose with him on a Christmas

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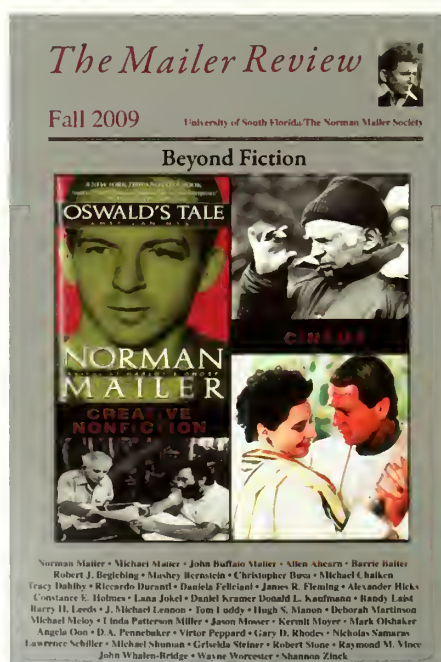

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card some years back, and who now sits beside the book *Children Who Hate*, a gift from a friend. Waters is surrounded by his "roommates," which is what he calls his art collection in *Role Models*, as well as shelves of books, including a fake shelf of paperbacks that hides CDs, and his famous fake food. Waters talks about and writes about gay porn filmmakers, deranged strippers, a reclusive fashion designer, and an imprisoned ex-Manson follower friend. While some may think these unorthodox role models are a put-on, he really is impressed by them. They have influenced him, as have Johnny Mathis and Little Richard—perhaps more typical role models—who he also writes about in his book. But *Role Models* isn't just about his role models; it's a modern-day history book, a hilarious romp through the dirty world of John Waters.

Waters can't help but tell some of his own wild stories about his own wild adventures in the book and in his home. While these might serve as a baring of the soul for someone else, Waters admits he's telling a whole lot of "nothin'."

"The trick is to make everybody think you've told them everything when you've really told them nothin'. And that's the ultimate exercise in celebrity. If I was going to tell you real personal things about my life it would prove I had no friends. You tell your friends that, not journalists. And when I hear people tell journalists really private things, I think, they don't have any friends," he says, sadly quiet. "And I don't deny anything in that book. . . . That I sleep with men, compared to everything else, is pretty normal." And, as he writes, it's the most normal, straight-seeming men that attract him.

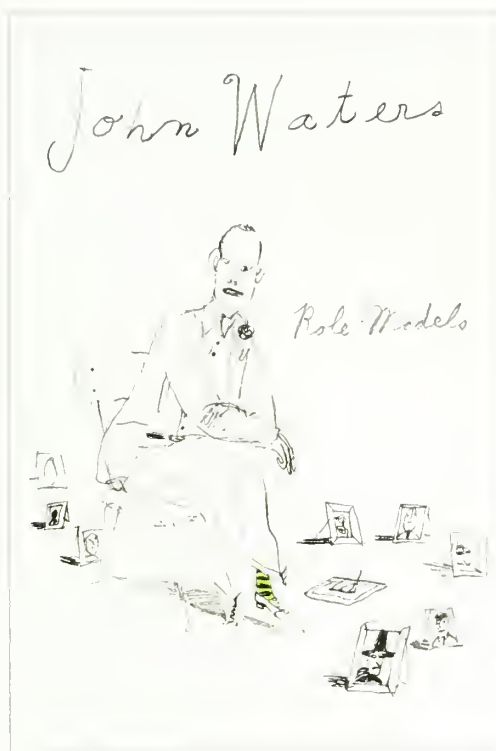
My real type, these days, is a blue-collar closet queen—they're the best. They don't want to go to premieres with you, they don't want to be in your movies, they don't want to meet your famous friends, they don't even want to be seen with you because then people would know. They just want to come over. The perfect boyfriend.

There are plenty of these guys in Baltimore, he says, and in Provincetown, too.

"I can name a few. Which I won't. I never name," he says. "I certainly never in my life have dated even once a famous person. That would be the last thing I would be interested in. I like people that take me into their world that's completely foreign, maybe work in a completely different thing. . . . I don't want to talk about my work all the time. Tennessee Williams said it the best, 'My type doesn't know who I am.' I love that statement."

In 1964 a young John Waters hitchhikes from Baltimore to Provincetown, not because Williams had been there, but because someone told him it was a weird place. He writes,

God, were they right. A very gay place, too, but a different kind of gay. "I may be queer, but I *am* this," I remember thinking. I've gone back to Provincetown for forty-six summers and every time I pass Captain Jack's Wharf or the "little bar" at the A-House, two places Tennessee got lucky in love, I mentally genuflect in respect.



Despite the fact that Williams didn't direct Waters to Provincetown, he's a huge influence, which is further evident by the Tennessee books lining his shelves.

"I knew that [Williams] went there, and later, when I wrote all the stuff about him, [that] he had major moments of his life happen there," Waters says about Provincetown, adding that the town affected his life too. "I worked at the Provincetown Bookshop for Elloyd Hansen, which I talk about [in the chapter called "Bookworm"], and Joel Newman. . . . Elloyd Hansen was my mentor as far as learning about books and he really had great taste about it. That was my college almost. Working there was really something that I remember incredibly fondly. And I worked for Molly Malone Cook and Mary Oliver too. So I had the two best possible employers that you could have in Provincetown if you were ever going to be a writer."

And while getting the money to fund a five-million-dollar indie film is impossible right now, it almost doesn't matter. Waters is a writer above all.

"Everything I do and every career I have is about writing. The artwork I write, I'm thinking up before I do it, the concept of it. . . . I never read any movie script that I didn't write. Even if it's the best script in the world, I have no interest in directing it," he says. "The only thing I've never done is a novel. I think I'd be really frightened to because every time I've ever thought up a fictitious story it's always been a screenplay. Which means a certain way of writing and maybe I'll try it, you know. But I'm not saying I will. The hardest kind of writing there is to me is novels and I do read novels all the time."

IT'S FRIDAY AFTERNOON, February 12, 2010, and John Waters is wandering through his home during our interview, pointing out paintings, drawings, and sculptures that he talks about in his book. Baltimore schools remain closed, and

most of the roads are still covered by a slippery slushy snow. There is nowhere in the city to move the snow; it's piled high on the side of the roads. Cars are so deeply buried that sometimes only an antenna signals that a vehicle is parked there. In a rare instance where a car has been dug out and driven away, a plastic lawn chair has replaced it, laying claim to the spot. Many of the shelves in Safeway, near Waters's house, are bare and the floor of the grocery store is muddy.

The two-day storm the weekend before, during which Waters made his weekly bar run, dumped nearly twenty-five inches on the Baltimore area, making it the second highest snowfall total in history (the highest was just over twenty-six inches that fell on January 27 and 28 in 1922), according to Jared Klein of the National Weather Service. Before Waters carries on with his predictably adventuresome weekend plans, I pose one final question—one he asks in *Role Models* but doesn't answer: Can living in a real John Waters movie bring you any kind of joy?

"Maybe not," he says, but quickly changes his mind. "Well, I think, yes. I tried to find those moments of joy with all these people. And I think I did."

ANN WOOD is the author of the novel *Bolt Risk* (Leapfrog Press, 2005), the short film *The Awakening* (Tim's Used Films, 2010), critical essays, short stories, and journalism. She is the winner of several New England Press Association awards.

PHOTO OF JOHN WATERS ON PAGE 103 BY GREG GORMAN

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EDMUND WHITE Gay Literature Now

AN INTERVIEW BY BILL CODA

THE WRITINGS OF EDMUND WHITE ARE integral to the canon of gay literature, but his full body of work includes much more than the autobiographical novels for which is most famous, including *A Boy's Own Story*, first published in 1982, a novel that tried to make sense of his painful experience of growing up gay. When he was fifteen he wrote an unpublished novel about being gay, "at a time when there were no other gay novels," he said.

"So I was really inventing a genre, and it was a way of administering a therapy to myself, I suppose." Whether he is working as a novelist, essayist, biographer, editor, or book reviewer, White injects his own personal style into his craft. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellow, and a winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award, his contributions are vastly varied. Recently, I sat with Edmund White for a few hours in his Chelsea apartment, where he bared his thoughts on the evolution of his gay identity.

BILL CODA: How remarkable small coincidences come about. Chris Busa, editor of this magazine, studied with David Kalstone when he was a graduate student at Rutgers. From your writings, I learned that he was one of your closest friends; the character Joshua (from *The Farewell Symphony*) was based upon him. You also discuss him quite a bit in your latest memoir, *City Boy*.

EDMUND WHITE: Yes, I try to preserve and honor his memory. He died so young in 1986 at the early age of fifty-three. His own books are so beloved, especially *Becoming a Poet*. That's a book that no matter where I go there are always people in the audience that love that book and use it for teaching. He wrote extensively about Robert Lowell, James Merrill, and Elizabeth Bishop.

BC: I know you have visited Provincetown from time to time.

EW: One of the first times I ever visited was around 1989 or 1990. I had a French lover who eventually died of AIDS but who I write about in my novel *The Married Man*. He wasn't that ill yet when we visited. At the time, I was teaching at Brown, and we took a trip up to Provincetown during the winter. We loved it. He was a very poetic kind of guy, an architect by training, and he was very young. His name was Hubert Sorin and he died in 1994. We had just met six or eight months before that. Over the years, I've never known very many people there, but I certainly knew that Norman Mailer, John Waters, Michael Cunningham, and Mark Doty have made Provincetown their full- or part-time homes. It's one of the few remaining gay destinations—yet is so much more.

BC: Here you are, a resident in one of the gay ghettos in Chelsea. I imagine this metaphor of you commuting to the ivory towers of Princeton, where you teach a few days a week. Where is "gay" literature headed?

EW: There are extraordinary gay writers around; I don't think that the good ones always get published. Even if they do, they don't always get the attention they deserve. I can name twenty who are under forty who are really good and overlooked. In France, they hate the idea of identity politics. They don't have the "Jewish" novel or the "black" novel or the "gay" novel or the "feminist" novel.

If you mention any of those things they look at you like you are crazy; nevertheless, they publish these books.

I was just in Paris and I read an amazing memoir by a gentleman named Didier Eribon. It's called *Retour à Reims (Return to Reims)*. He's the guy who wrote one of the best biographies of Foucault and he's a philosopher himself. He's very influenced by America; in fact, he's taught at Yale. His book is about how it was easy for him to come out as a gay person. What was difficult, for him, was to come out as "working class"—such an interesting take on what readers might expect. When people talk about "Gay Lit," they focus on coming out. But there are other topics one can explore. Being gay and being working class is one. In his case, he puts enormous distance between himself and his family. He learned a new accent, new manners, and new interests. As an example, when his father died a new friend of his said to him, "Well, you have to at least go back for the opening of the will." And he said, "I could never explain to a guy like that we own nothing. Nothing, at least, to leave in a will. The idea of a will would be preposterous in our family." A lot of material around gay life has not been explored. There are many good writers, but, unfortunately, not many good readers. That's a paradox that I see right now.

BC: Are there other differences that you've noticed in your recent travels?

EW: I was in Madrid a few days ago and I went to see *A Single Man*, which I had not seen here in the states. The audience was filled with straight people. I thought, gosh, if this were America, the audience would be almost all gay men. In Spain, the theater was packed; there might have been only four gay couples. Otherwise, the theater was filled with women, straight couples, and so on.

BC: Speaking of Isherwood and *A Single Man*, have you worked with anyone about adapting or translating any of your works to the screen?

EW: Talk, but so far nothing has ever come of it. The French, for a long time, have played with the idea of making my novel *The Married Man* into a movie. A Franco-American coproduction of sorts. They had an idea to have people speak French with English subtitles when they are actually

speaking French, and have the English characters speak English with French subtitles when they are speaking English. It would relate to both audiences equally. I suppose that if *A Single Man* had done better financially, Hollywood would be more receptive to move forward on projects like this. Books can go out in the world and collar their five thousand or ten thousand readers and you have a small audience—but a loyal, faithful one. With movies, you have to fill that theater every night in a very short period of time.

A lot more French movies have gay themes. One called *Love Songs (Les chansons d'amour)* was released a few years ago. It starred a gorgeous young man, who has made dozens of movies, named Louis Garrel. He has a young girlfriend who suddenly has a heart attack and dies at age twenty in a disco. Then, this sixteen-year-old boy, who is unbelievably cute, falls in love with him, and comforts him. He is basically a straight guy, but eventually falls in love with the boy. At the end of the movie there is a fantastic final scene. Louis Garrel is as big a heartthrob as France has. He is in movie after movie with all the hot girls in France. At the very end of this movie, he and the boy have just made love and he is very drunk. He's standing in the window and you think the guy is going to jump. He turns to the boy and says, "Love me a little bit less, but love me for a long time." Such a great line! It still gives me goose bumps.

BC: How very André Gide and *The Immoralist*!

EW: Exactly, and I wonder if that movie would ever be made in America—big stars, straight interests versus gay interests.

BC: Over forty years, you have written biographies, essays, plays, as well as novels. How do you decide where you allocate your energy?

EW: You mentioned Gide. He quotes the poet Paul Valéry, "If you are a good writer you would lose with every good work what you advance with the preceding one." I read that line when I was young and it really impressed me. Now that my career has spanned so many years I can at times see patterns and repetitions. But when I was younger, people were surprised that I didn't move in a certain direction. For instance, right after I wrote *A Boy's Own Story*, I wrote *Caracole*.

BC: That was your novel which got you into trouble with Susan Sontag, correct?

EW: Yes, but it wasn't known that way at the time. In fact, it wasn't known at all. It was a big flop but a good book, very surreal, set in some made-up sixteenth-century Venetian town. Now it has this gossip side to it because of the conflict between Sontag and I, but that's only come about later.

BC: When you wrote *A Boy's Own Story* did you know it would become part of a trilogy with *The Beautiful Room Is Empty* and *The Farewell Symphony*?

EW: Not really. That came to me later. When *A Boy's Own Story* was a big success, I thought I might as well go on with the story. I was living my life. The books were trailing about ten or fifteen years behind. By the time I got to *The Beautiful Room Is Empty* in 1987 I was separated from that action by almost twenty years. I moved to Paris in 1983 and by 1987 I already felt like I had lived there forever. Ironically, I feel it is my most American book; when I was living in America, I tried to convince myself that I was really in Paris, even though I didn't know what that was like. I couldn't speak French yet at that time, but I was inserting little French phrases in my work—as if they were a pledge on the future. But once I lived in Paris, I found all of that mildly irritating. I wanted to write a purely American book.

BC: Moving from your novels to your biographies: the three you're most noted for are on Marcel Proust, Jean Genet, and Arthur Rimbaud, all French authors. You struggled especially with the life of Genet. Why?

EW: None of these biographies was easy, but Genet took seven years, while Proust and Rimbaud only a year each. The real difference was that the Genet biography was the first biography on that writer to be published. He died in 1986 and I started writing it in 1987. When you write a first biography, especially when you write of someone who has died recently, there are all these people around that knew him. You have to interview them now or they will all be dead in a few years. But they don't want to be interviewed because Genet was such a difficult person. He never stayed close to people and he always broke up with them and destroyed them or hurt them. In each case, I had to deal with complex feelings. French people are much more reticent than Americans. I would always sigh with relief when it came to a point when I had to get information from Americans; I could pick up the phone and they would tell me their life story, without me qualifying who I was. Americans are very generous with information, as opposed to the French, who view information as property. They don't want to give it to you unless they know they are going to get something back, and not just an acknowledgement. Something tangible, like cash. There could not have been a literary biography more difficult than Genet's. The amount of research needed was immense. He was a criminal; almost all of his friends were criminals, who tend to die young. They are very hard to find. They don't want to talk. If they do talk, you can't believe them. Usually, they want to be paid. In addition, Genet was a really secretive man. Not even his best friends knew the name of the town where



EDMUND WHITE

he was born. I had to reconstruct his real biography, which I found fascinating.

BC: So there's the fictional life of Genet and then there's the biographical elements in his work?

EW: Yes, and that's fine because he calls those books novels, and even *The Thief's Journal* is not really a journal, it's a novel. For instance, in his book he will say, "The two years I spent in Spain were the most terrible ones of my life." Well, he was actually only there for two months, but the interesting thing is that if you say two months it may sound very trivial. To give it the right poetic weight he tells the reader he was there for two years because he was there in the midst of the Depression. Spain was one of the poorest countries in the world at the time. People would squabble over an onion and he was a thief and a prostitute. It was pretty dramatic; he suffered terribly with hunger, violence committed on him, and so he had to say two years to make it sound credible and more imposing. He would say, "There's a wounded part in my heart which is called Spain." I think it must have been a terrible experience for him.

BC: As authors, we talk a lot about the thin line between autobiography and autobiographical fiction. I read through your body of work, most recently your memoirs of your early life, *My Lives* and *City Boy*, and I sense I've read this material before, but in a different format.

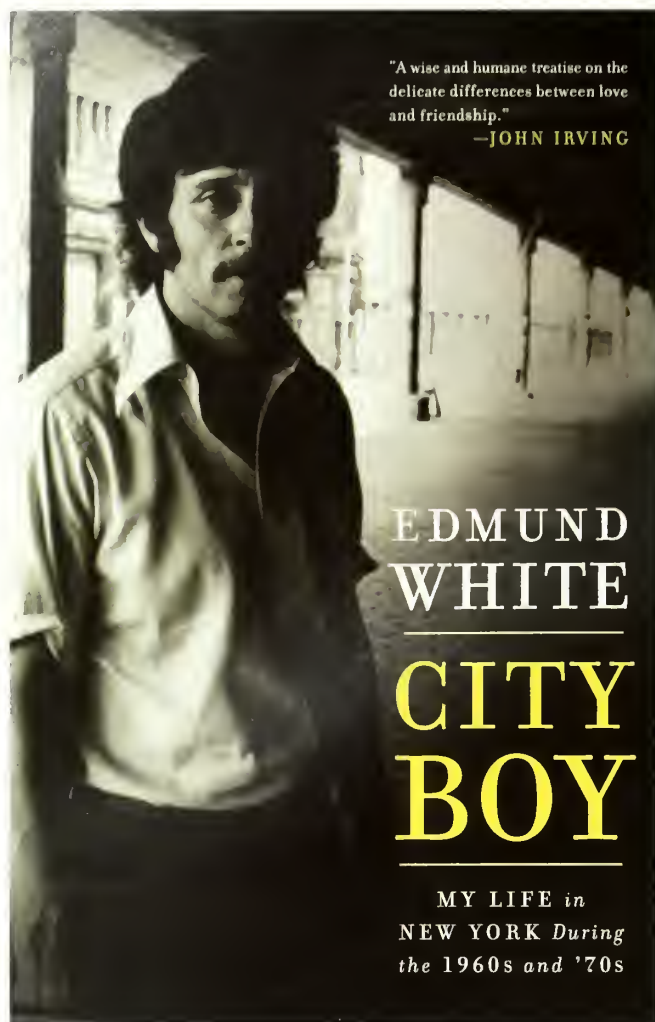
EW: Exactly. If you call something a novel, you have the right to simplify the chronology, change characters, and rearrange events to make it more dramatic. If you are calling something a memoir, I believe you have a contract with the reader to be as faithful to the truth as you can be. Obviously, everybody has memories which might distort

things and there are a number of psychological texts that study the extent in which people distort their own experience. Memoir is the truth as the writer best recalls it.

BC: You've said that a novelist's first obligation is to be true, not a common denominator or PR man to all gay people.

EW: There was a period in the 1970s and the early 1980s when a lot of gay critics, who really were more interested in politics than in art or fiction, would criticize authors for not showing gay characters in a positive light. Critics in *The Advocate* would say, for instance, that Isherwood's book portrays a sad professor, and the familiar theme of suicide once again is included. They intimated that you should really show everyone in a positive light. I thought that was bad, even politically. In *A Boy's Own Story*, people would criticize me for showing the narrator as somebody who would betray his teacher, but I thought if we were all perfect and well-adjusted and mature before gay liberation then why would we have bothered to even have gay liberation. Isn't it true that an oppressive period distorts personalities? Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *Enemies, A Love Story* is about people living in Brooklyn in the late 1940s, all Holocaust survivors. They are all bats—they can't sleep, they drink too much, they can't eat, they fight constantly, they have sex around the clock. And you think, "This makes total sense." His characters are noble and beautiful but they are also homy, completely traumatized, neurotic, and have separate identities.

BC: I don't know if I have read any individual piece of your work that doesn't have a sexual element to it. Am I correct? Does everything boil down to people's primal urges? Do most gay men search



out gay lit because they are looking for a point of reference related to their inner struggles?

EW: Most people, especially in my era, bothered to come out primarily because they were very driven sexually. If you could sublimate your sex drive and not have much of any interest in sex, then why would you do it? It's a source of great conflict.

BC: Have you personally transferred great conflict to the page?

EW: When you are trying to figure out the plot, where you are going with the story and how to create action and not just have it be a long essay or meditation, I think of Proust where page after page of just totally brilliant analysis is dramatic in its own way. It's so unusual and so revelatory and it goes on so long and has such depth that it just crackles with energy, so I think that people make the mistake of too rigid a division between action and analysis. I think they can be equally dramatic.

Writers tend to love uneducated street people. Perhaps it's more titillating than what we see on a daily basis. I believe that the lives we actually lead are interesting. I guess that's one way I would tend to justify putting so much sex into my books. Gay men certainly have a lot of sex and it's a big part of their actions and decisions in their lives.

I heard a young composer being interviewed on a radio show last night, and he was saying that he grew up in Texas in a Baptist family and one of his friends from this small town in Texas went to Interlaken, the music camp in Michigan. He

surmised that if he went there he would meet some gay people because he had never met one that he knew of. He went there and went on to become a musician and composer. All of the major decisions in his life were made partly because of this search for sex and the promise of sexual opportunities.

BC: There's lots of sex, but not much politics in your work.

EW: No, not in my fiction. I've written some essays. I'm a militant atheist. I've spoken at conferences and in the classroom and I am always railing against all forms of monotheism. The three great monotheistic religions are terrible for gay people.

BC: The issue of coming out dominated gay writing in the sixties and seventies. In the eighties, AIDS was the issue. Where is gay lit going from here?

EW: People talk about post-gay writing. Possibly even your narrator is gay, but he is also interested in the world around him and the problems of his straight friends and the world he lives in. I'm writing a novel now about a straight man and

a gay man who are best friends. It starts in the 1960s and goes through the 1980s. The gay man is in love with the straight man from the beginning. They have an early falling out and then, later, they become friends again in the 1970s. The straight guy, who is Roman Catholic, has a wife and three children in Larchmont but he is always staying in New York City to seek girls that he actually meets through the gay guy. The book is entitled *Jack Holmes and His Friend*.

One of the things I like to do, and I've done this mostly in short fiction, is to take some of the main events in my life and have another person, either somebody I know or an entirely invented character, live through those things. In my short story called "An Oracle" (in the book *Skinned Alive*), which takes place in Greece, much material is taken from my life. I was living in Crete and I got involved with a boy who couldn't speak a word of English; he was thirty years younger than me. I would give him bits of money and he was one of the great beauties that I have ever been in bed with. At the end of the summer, he spoke to me in perfect English, whereas I was grasping for words in Greek.

This came together with a friend, a PhD in philosophy, and a famous beauty, who had a much older lover who had kept him for years. The older lover died from AIDS and the family rushed in and took everything, leaving the kept boy, who was no longer a boy and no longer kept, high and dry. Here was this midlife crisis of a gay man who is mourning but who is also going through a terrible ordeal. I thought I would have him come to Crete and meet that beautiful boy that I met

and have that boy actually say at the end of the story things in English that resemble what the dead lover used to say. I mention that because all of those elements came together where a friend leads the events of my life.

I have another story in the same book called "Palace Days": there again I have a friend who ran a gay travel agency and it began to fall apart when AIDS came on because gay men were afraid to travel with each other anymore. I thought, "What if he comes to Paris and leads my life but in the slightly different sense that he is interested in cooking, etc., and he takes classes at Le Cordon Bleu? Basically, I took this person I knew, this crisis in his life, and had him move to Paris and lead my life in what-if scenarios.

And there you have both the pleasure of imitation and the pleasure of invention, which are the two greatest pleasures in writing. This book I am writing now is very influenced by Richard Yates, so it's a lot about action and almost no analysis. A very good friend of mine, Isabel Fonseca, who is married to Martin Amis, said, "So thereby you have stripped yourself of everything you do well."

BC: The lines seem to be blurred so easily. Where do the lines between friendship, sex, and love cross?

EW: Many times it is difficult, especially for gay men, to discern between the three. In *City Boy*, I talk about the separation and our attempt to categorize them. The social conservatism that AIDS brought out made those new paths and those new distinctions collapse back into the marriage model and I think that "gay marriage" is counter to lovers, fuck buddies, and friends as we try to separate out sexual and social urges. It worked quite well for awhile. AIDS was an enemy to that sort of experimentation.

BC: And *City Boy* was all about life in New York in the sixties and seventies, and then in the eighties you were in France.

EW: Yes, I am going to write a book about that.

BC: A *City Boy* sequel?

EW: Well, my life in Paris was quite different. I wore raggedy jeans in New York in the seventies. In the eighties, I worked for *Vogue* in Paris and I met a lot of the top designers. I lived in the YSL world. I wrote some of the first articles in English for *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue* about Christian Lacroix and other couturiers. When I went to France, I was not preparing to work for *Vogue*. It happened after I was already there. I had gotten a Guggenheim and I thought I would just live for a year in Paris, which had always been a dream of mine. Then, in fact, the dollar was very strong. It was easy to live cheaply abroad and there were tax advantages for Americans to live abroad then. Susan Sontag, when she started hating me, used to joke that the way I could afford to live there was because I was a KGB agent.

BC: Then you later wrote the biography that I am in love with—the Proust biography.

EW: I go back to Proust much more often than either Genet or Rimbaud. I would have liked to have known him. Genet and Rimbaud were bad boys, terrible rebels, and mostly offensive people. They would have hated me. Genet hated white

people, he hated gay people, he hated Americans, he hated writers, and he hated the middle class. I fail on five scores. Proust would have understood me. I would have loved to have known him.

BC: Are there one or two people you have met who you feel lucky to have known?

EW: One person, who I will eventually write about, is a guy named Albert Dichy. I hired him as a researcher on the Genet book. He is an amazingly brilliant man, a tremendous womanizer, and one of the most interesting people I have ever known. To me, one of the things that best indicates his intelligence is that you can never guess where he is going with his conversation. He never repeats himself—not that he's striving to be original at every moment. He is constantly thinking and looking at a fresh start almost every time he talks. That's so rare. I find it a challenge and sometimes exhausting, but also incredibly delightful. He is the world's leading authority on Genet, yet he has writer's block and has not really written anything extensive on his own. He has written small, wonderful pieces.

BC: This past fall you were on sabbatical from teaching. You were at the Bogliasco writer's colony in Italy; at Christmas time, you were in Key West, and then Spain. Is this downtime to recharge or work related or vacation?

EW: Bogliasco is a writer's colony and I was there for a month working on my current novel. I then went to another writer's colony that I have been to many times that I love outside of Florence—Santa Maddalena. Then I went to Rome and Zurich. I have a Spanish boyfriend and visited with him. Michael, my husband, and I have an open relationship. He has a German lover and I have a Spanish lover. Michael and I have been together for fifteen years and we love each other more every day. I feel so lucky—many couples I know don't even like each other but what we have works. We adore each other. He has kept me young, as well as my students and my lover in Spain. Do you know that there are *six* bars just for chubby chasers in Madrid? I discovered the whole Silver Daddies crowd. I even met my Spanish lover on the Internet on Silverdaddies.com.

BC: Your academic life is also something of great notoriety. You have taught at several leading universities, including Princeton for the last decade. How do you balance the academic and writing lives?

EW: It's difficult to make a living as a writer so the teaching is essential. *City Boy*, my latest work, sold ten thousand copies in America and probably will sell five thousand copies in Europe. You can't live on that. There are the changes in the industry. The novel *Jack Holmes and His Friend* is for my editor at Ecco, but I believe that the French memoir I will write as a sequel to *City Boy* will be for Bloomsbury again. I have no problem getting the work out there. My office at Princeton is right next to Joyce Carol Oates, who is a great inspiration and certainly has an incredible body of work published. At Princeton, I have met extraordinary gay men and currently I have four grad students whom I have dinner with regularly. They're all very bright. Most of my students don't even

know that I am a writer. They are all struggling with physics or economics to prepare themselves for big careers.

BC: Is it easier to write during relatively calm periods or if your life is in turbulence?

EW: Frankly, I am always so broke that I am always writing against a deadline. I don't have much time to worry about whether or not I am inspired. I write on trains, on planes, at cafés in Paris, which I love. You can order your coffee and the table is yours all day. I still write longhand. When you want to chat with somebody, you can always call a cute waiter over. They aren't hustling you away from the table. I find the perfect rhythm there.

I just did a big long piece on John Cheever's biography and his complete works for the *New York Review of Books*. Then I did a very long piece for the *New Yorker*, which they rejected after making me do multiple drafts. Ann Beattie said to me, "You're doing more work for the *New Yorker*? Prepare for heartbreak—they put you through all this and then they wind up not taking it." I had to negotiate the kill fee for that piece since I spent a month writing it and it was five thousand words. Now I'm selling the same piece in England.

BC: So there are always multiple projects going on?

EW: Yes, short-term assignments, long-term work on the books, teaching, and my play, *Terre Haute*, which is now being performed in different places. It was just done in Rochester at the Bread & Water Theatre and it's going to be done in Terre Haute, which I have never actually been to. *Terre Haute* is set in the town of the same name, where Timothy McVeigh was—it's the only federal prison for death row people since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty. They had to find a home for these people like the Unabomber and McVeigh.

At times, like when I was working on the Genet biography, I didn't permit myself to write any fiction. I just worked on that year after year. Yet, sometimes the urge would get too strong so I would write these short stories, which are more to the point.

BC: Who do you write for?

EW: I primarily write for intelligent gay men. I don't want to write for beach bunnies and guys who just want a quick, light read.

BC: I hope you do realize that you have impacted thousands of lives. For instance, when I first read *A Boy's Own Story*, I had this intense, visceral response. Since your life is always a decade ahead of your work, where are you headed?

EW: I used to lament that an author like John Updike, for instance, has many more readers than I do. But though my readers are fewer, I am always comforted in knowing that they have been very affected by my writing, as I am not sure other author's readers would be. I feel like my books have had an impact on some men's lives as they have gone through the struggles that I went through. It's sad that the gay bookstore is gone away for the most part. But then there are some writers, like Robert Glück, who have their own literary movement in San Francisco, called narrative realism or

something like that. He has this surrealistic book of linked stories called *Elements of a Coffee Service*. I invited him to come to speak when I was at Brown. At the time, he said that he made ten thousand dollars a year, and he used to joke that he could tell people that he fucked his mother repeatedly and it wouldn't raise an eyebrow, but friends begged him not to talk about his financial situation. The French used to say, "We talk about sex so we don't have to talk about money, and Americans talk about money so they don't have to talk about sex." I believe it was the Polish author and Nobel Prize winner Czeslaw Milosz who said, "When a writer is born into a family, that family is destroyed." Writers needn't worry about what others will think.

I have just received the Premio Mondello Award—one of the most prestigious Italian literary prizes—for my biography of Rimbaud. I will be going to Palermo in May to the awards ceremony. It's been awarded annually since 1975 and other recipients in the past have included Günter Grass, Kurt Vonnegut, J. M. Coetzee, Margaret Atwood, and Don DeLillo. This summer I am going to Madrid with John Irving, who is my new best friend. He is writing a novel about a bisexual man and he wants to check out the whole gay scene with me. I'm going to be his tour guide. I can't think of anything more fun than that.

BILL CODA, who recently received his MFA degree in Creative Writing from Wilkes University, writes regularly for several lifestyle and travel publications. He is currently working on his memoir of growing up gay, Mistaken Identity.

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"Listen on Back, Honey"

An Interview with BROOKE NEWMAN

BY RAYMOND ELMAN

FIRST MET BROOKE NEWMAN IN THE EARLY 1970s, playing tennis at the Provincetown Tennis Club with her husband, Andy Hecht (son of Harvey Hecht, a former Davis Cup player from Czechoslovakia, who also played at the Club when Chris Brannan was pro). My first impression of Brooke was of a tall, smart, engaging, and extremely competitive woman. I can still feel the tension on the tennis court when Brian Harrison and I were ahead in a tournament doubles match against Brooke and Andy. They knew they were better players than us, and it was killing them that we were ahead (we ultimately lost). In the 1970s, I also played tennis with Brooke's brother Jeff, and her mother, Ruth, but I never met Brooke's father, James

Newman, who had passed away before I arrived in Provincetown in 1970. (James Newman was a brilliant mathematician, author of the best-selling classic *The World of Mathematics*, and served on the first Atomic Energy Commission with his good friend Albert Einstein.) Over the next four decades, I would see Brooke almost every summer, mostly on Ballston Beach, and catch up with the evolution of her first family, her son Nikos and daughter Samantha ("Sam") Hecht; with her second husband, Rick Carlson, and their two boys, Joey and Blue; and her current husband, Mark LeRose. Only in recent years have I come to know Brooke beyond beach chatter, and now she has put her dramatic childhood on display for all to read in *Jenniemaë & James: A Memoir in Black & White* (Harmony Books, 2010).

RAYMOND ELMAN: You've received a lot of praise from people who read *Jenniemaë & James*. Would you mind mentioning the people who have agreed to provide blurbs?

BROOKE NEWMAN: In chronological order it went from Justin Kaplan to Larry McMurtry to Joe McGinniss to Susan Cheever.

RE: How long have you known Larry McMurtry?

BN: I don't know him personally, but I knew that he had purchased books from my father, who had an immense collection of rare books. Years ago McMurtry, who has a great passion for collecting books, had a bookstore in Georgetown called "Booked Up" (which still exists though he no longer runs or owns it), and he now owns a bookstore with the same name in Texas.

RE: Can you describe the odyssey of how this book project evolved and how long you have been thinking about it?

BN: The book started at least eight years ago, but I've been telling these stories to my children since they were born. I could have started the book earlier, but I never had the concentrated time to put into any project because I was very much a full-time mother, and I devoted a lot of time to bringing up my kids. So it wasn't until my youngest child went to college that I had the time to concentrate on this story. And even then, I started and stopped and started and stopped. Michael Korda, a very good friend of mine, kept me going. When Michael was a young editor at Simon & Schuster he worked with my father, and knew him quite well. That made my story something he could relate to. Michael's whip on my back kept the story going, and his encouragement. As well as people like Justin Kaplan and Anne Bernays. I gave Justin the book when I finished it, and I was extremely nervous, because Justin always appeared to me to be quite serious when it had anything to do with work. I say that in the best light. When I

gave the manuscript to him, I had a feeling that it was in fairly good shape, but you never know. I shared the work with Michael Korda over the years because Michael's really a best friend and I know that when I send him something that really sucks, he will politely let me know that it sucks. And I'm OK with that. When he tells me something is quite good, then I know I'm on my way. Whereas with Justin, I wasn't quite sure how that balance was going to work out. But I gave it to him as soon as I had finished the first draft of the book, which was in June 2008. He got back to me the next day—literally—and was very complimentary. I thought, "Damn, maybe this is OK."

RE: I read Michael Korda's memoir and history of his family, *Charmed Lives*, which I loved. I didn't realize he was old enough to be your father's editor—that puts him in his seventies [b.1933]. Given the age difference, how did you become friends?

BN: I first met Michael when I was fifteen and he was twenty-six. After I graduated from Sarah Lawrence, I worked at Time-Life Books, about a block from Rockefeller Center, which is where Simon & Schuster was located. Michael had just become managing editor at S&S, and needed an assistant. I was not happy at Time-Life; I interviewed with Michael, and I wound up working for him for a couple of years. When I met Andy [Hecht] and moved to Colorado, I left S&S, but I have stayed in touch with Michael the whole time.

RE: How did you meet Andy?

BN: I met Andy at the Provincetown Tennis Club. I was playing tennis and driving around in my father's Aston Martin. I gave Andy a ride home from the club one day and he said, "Tomorrow I'm going to Paris and I have two tickets. Would you like to come with me?" I said yes. It was the sixties. I arrived at Kennedy airport, and I had no idea what his last name was. We got on the plane, and I kept trying to look over at his passport to learn his name. Anyway, I've known Michael

Korda for a long time and stayed in touch over the years. Whenever I return to New York, I stop by and visit him. I have other good friends in publishing. I grew up around writers and writing. It's what I know and I feel comfortable with.

RE: I know a number of children of artists and writers, who grew up surrounded by artists and writers on the Outer Cape, and have a tough time dealing with their parents' legacy. I once discussed this point with Judith Shahn (daughter of Ben Shahn), and she said, "You never really get over that hump."

BN: It can be paralyzing. Growing up, I had a tough time with mathematics, but after my father died, and when I moved with Andy to Colorado, I went to architecture school, and not only did I do well, but I was the best student in calculus and advanced algebra.

RE: I used to play tennis with your mother, Ruth, and I came to know her pretty well. She was my partner in one of the "Lee Falk-E. J. Kahn, Jr., Truro Invitational Tennis Tournaments. For a long time, I probably knew her better than I knew you. But I never heard anyone tell the stories that are in your book about her relationship with your father, and his unusual approach to maintaining extracurricular girlfriends—which either speaks to the close-mouthed virtue of our Cape community or to the possibility that I was oblivious.

BN: First of all, we're talking about the forties and fifties and early sixties, when there weren't a lot of people who got divorced, so extramarital affairs frequently didn't end a marriage. Certainly my mother's good friends all knew what was going on. My mother was burdened with self-esteem issues and she clearly put up with more than another woman might have. These were not issues she would have publicly talked about, but, for her close friends, it would have been hard not to know. I believe that one way in which she dealt with it after years of being unhappy with my father's affairs, was that

she, too, had her own lovers. I actually wrote a one-act play called "My Mother's Lovers," which won a playwriting award in the 1997 Pacific Northwest Writers Guild Literary Contest. By the early seventies, she was very involved with a young man who's still alive, so I won't mention his name. I guess you never met any of her boyfriends.

RE: I don't really remember. But if you compare your stories of Ruth and James with all the stories of interactions in the Wellfleet Woods, it fits right in.

BN: Yes. It was part of their generation. It was like women proclaiming their independence by smoking cigarettes or wearing edgy clothing. I remember quite well being mortified when I was little and we'd go to Provincetown to play tennis and my mother would be wearing halter tops.

RE: I remember that.

BN: She was very large busted and I was close to terrified that her boobs would come flying out of the halter top. Yet her halter tops were just one of the ways in which she, like many women, was striking out with her sense of independence. As her daughter, watching her run for a drop shot, I felt more than a little worried and embarrassed! Though, I think it's fair to say that probably at one time or another most children feel embarrassed by their parents' style or idiosyncrasies, no matter how mainstream or offbeat.

RE: I only encountered your parents' community when I arrived in Provincetown in 1970. I was twenty-five and they were in their fifties or older. They never seemed wild to me.

BN: But you experienced the craziness of a Lee Falk Sunday tennis brunch with Bloody Marys and Black Velvets. Most people who knew my father in the sixties would have said that he was frequently on the edge. He had an Aston Martin and would come flying up Lee Falk's dirt road, and I would just hope that there were no small animals or children in the way. My father was not alone—Ginny Kahn would come careening around the corner, just before their house on South Pamet Road, with her Corvair on two wheels. You could hear her way before she arrived at her driveway. Edginess defined many of the lives of that social crowd.

RE: It sounds like over the course of your life, you absorbed these stories and, later, shared them with your children. Do you have any qualms about making these stories public in your book?

BN: Yes. I read *Half Broke Horses* by Jeannette Walls, who created the story of her grandmother based on the stories she heard growing up. She calls it a novel about a true story. When I was working on *Jenniemaes & James*, I would think, "What kind of combination is it?" Obviously the dialogue is a creation of my imagination based on what I knew of those three people. I constantly asked: "Is it fiction?" This issue came up frequently for me and I discussed it with many people—my agent, my editor, others. In fact, I was obsessive about it, constantly asking, "What is it? Is it really a memoir?" The story is true, and the facts of what my father did are true. I didn't want to say it was a novel, because that would take away from the core and the juice of the story. The



RUTH NEWMAN AT BALLSTON BEACH, c.1950 (COLLECTION BROOKE NEWMAN)

truth is always intriguing. It's also very clear that I've created the dialogue. So it was a struggle for me to know how I was going to wed those factors: what was fiction, what was real, and what to call it.

RE: I assume that at some point from your teenage years through your adult years, you experienced confusion and pain connected with the behavior of your parents. And over the course of time the rawness of those feelings has diminished or been cauterized. From your book, it feels like your parents are now two people you can admire, love, and accept as people who made some unusual choices. But at some point, their situation was not holding the same emotional tug for you in a way that would inhibit or prohibit you from exposing their story to the world.

BN: True. I think that's a very wise statement. There's no question that it required a lot of people, time, and space for me to come to grips with their choices. But you grow up the way you grow up, and though I realized that other people did not have the same lifestyles or the same home environments, I accepted that as my trajectory. As a young girl I clearly had more angst than I consciously knew about or was willing to confront, which was evident by the fact that I pulled out half my head of hair! But as a child you go to school, you play with your friends, you come home, you are with family, and you obviously are not an objective observer of what is going on in your life or what kind of path might lie ahead. I do recall saying to myself I will not live such a stressful life, but I don't think I understood what that meant. As you get older and you begin to see yourself repeating some of those same scenarios that you grew up with, you begin to see them with a little humor—hopefully—and certainly with more love. My father was a very bright and raucously funny man who had a wonderful laugh. And my mother was a quick, witty, artistic woman. So after I had digested some of the turmoil that surrounded my

parents, I think I combined some of those qualities—particularly the humor and edginess—and fashioned my own style.

RE: You didn't crawl into a shell, move to Amish country, and start raising dairy cows.

BN: No. But I went through my own number of husbands, lovers, and so forth.

RE: Was there a Jenniemaes for your kids?

BN: No, because we never had enough money. You have to remember that it cost very little to have a full-time maid in the 1950s. I've heard so many wonderful stories from other people who grew up similarly. It was a generation who often-times had people working in their homes who were called a "maid," and that maid did everything. It was a woman, usually a black woman, who took care of the kids and cooked and cleaned and did the ironing and more, six days a week, frequently. These people were often with a family for many years. Jenniemaes was there when I came home from school. She was there when I fell down on the playground and came home. I remember going to a Halloween contest at a playground, when I was eight or nine. Jenniemaes put together a hobo costume for me. Those are the people who were there for us as children, even though we didn't necessarily come from wealthy families. My family did not have money until my father's best seller, *The World of Mathematics*, came out. It was a very common practice to have a maid in those days. You could be lower middle class and have a maid. Now cleaning people cost, what, forty-five dollars an hour?

RE: I had the same experience. I think I told you the story about the first maid I remember, named Edna, who opened a magnum of Moët Chandon champagne, that was being saved for my sister's engagement, while we were out for dinner. When we came home, there was a big crowd around our front steps, and Edna was sitting on the stoop, drunk on champagne, playing a guitar



JAMES NEWMAN WITH EINSTEIN, c 1955 PHOTO BY PHILIPPE HALSMAN © HALSMAN ARCHIVE

and singing songs. But for most of my growing-up years, we had a maid named Blanche, and I remember composing a short story about her for a high school English class.

BN: Yes! These were very significant relationships.

RE: I'm just realizing that we're the same age, and that we could have seen each other when you were at Sarah Lawrence and I was at Penn. I used to *love* hanging out at Sarah Lawrence, and I had a girlfriend there for about a year. One thing you and I probably remember in common was a doubles exhibition on the Sarah Lawrence tennis courts, put on by Chuck McKinley and a couple of other people of that ilk, before the pros were allowed to compete in Grand Slam tournaments.

BN: I must have been there, because I played on the Sarah Lawrence tennis team, for whatever that was worth.

RE: Was Joe Papaleo [longtime Truro summer resident and writer] teaching there when you were a student?

BN: Joe was supposed to be my don and the dons chose what they thought you should become when you grew up. They would look at all your essays and what you had done, and the path they chose for me was that I should write. They chose Joe Papaleo to be my don. But I knew Joe from tennis at Lee Falk's court, so I said, "Nah, I don't know," even though I adored Joe. At that time I decided I was going to be a doctor. I don't know why.

RE: Carmen Cicero also taught at Sarah Lawrence.

BN: Yes, I had him too. One of my dreams and passions was that I wanted to be a painter. So I knew Carmen at Sarah Lawrence. There are a couple of other people who have been in and out of Truro who have a Sarah Lawrence connection.

RE: One of the things I want to make sure that we discuss is your recollection of driving up from Washington to spend the summer in Truro, which you describe briefly in the book. I love that your trips go back to a time before the New Jersey Turnpike existed. I am also completely awestruck by the fact that you and your father used to stop and visit with Al-

bert Einstein (one of my biggest heroes), on the trip from Washington to Truro. You're the only person I know who ever met Albert Einstein, and went beyond meeting him to knowing him. And I wonder if there's more to your relationship with Einstein than the scene you describe in your book.

BN: Well, Einstein died in 1955 and I was only ten. So my knowing him was from the perspective of a child. For me it was just a part of the trek to Truro. There were a lot of powerful and famous people who passed through our house. Einstein, for many people, was the most famous. At that young age, I did not think any differently about one person over another. Stopping in Princeton to visit Einstein is only retrospectively important. I don't know at what age I knew that Einstein was a significant person, but I certainly didn't know that then. Stopping many times to visit people was just a part of the long trip from Washington to Truro. The trek to Truro was almost like wagon wheels across the Midwest. When our cars had radios, we were lucky if we received a signal. The windows would be open for the dogs, and the car was always packed with books and papers and clothes for the entire summer. We'd go in June, depending on my parents' work schedule, and sometimes our school schedule. My father didn't really care much about when school started or stopped. We just went when they wanted to go in June and returned in September, usually after Labor Day. And we'd stop in Princeton, and sometimes we'd stop in New York if my father had work there. The next stop was New Haven, where we'd spend a few days with

Tom Emerson, who was a civil liberties law professor at Yale. It would take at least five, six days to get to the Cape. My first memory of Truro is when I was two or three. In the late 1940s we rented the Freeman house, which is off Old County Road. Elizabeth Freeman's family was one of the families who had been on the *Mayflower*. Laura Freeman still owns the house with her husband, a wonderful old house, down a long dirt road that runs past Carmen Cicero's house, which used to be a railroad station. We rented the Freeman house for a long time and I remember that we used to go to what is now Carmen's house, where the stationmaster would be waiting for a train.

RE: Why did your parents come to Truro in the first place?

BN: I think it was because it was an intellectual community, and also a psychiatric community, and my mother was a psychologist. They also knew Gyorgy Kepes and Bruno Rossi and their families. I don't know if you knew Bruno Rossi, who was a major award-winning scientist, who died in 1993. He lived right next to Kepes.

RE: I never met Rossi, but I knew Gyorgy a bit.

BN: There was a community of scientists, psychologists, artists, and writers, and clearly that drew my parents to the area. Most vividly I recall that this often egotistical and very competitive group of people would play baseball in Wellfleet. I also recall that most of them were infamous cheaters! My parents wanted to be out of Washington, which is miserable in the summer. They both had careers that allowed them to leave DC, though my father worked every day in Truro anyway. We'd always have to wait for my father to finish work before we could go to Newcomb Hollow, which was usually between two and two thirty in the afternoon. Following the beach we'd all go wash (with soap and shampoo) in Gull Pond. We were very much a part of the "Wellfleet Woods" community—the Chermayeffs, Halls, Breuers, Saarins, the Jencks family. And the great Pete Seeger would be there.

RE: Wow! I didn't even know that Seeger had a Cape connection.

BN: Yes. He used to come to some of the square dances, which would be in a parking lot in Wellfleet, where Hatch's produce is now. I don't think there's any question that both my parents would say that the people of the Wellfleet Woods community were a central focus for them on the Outer Cape.

RE: How old were you when your father died?

BN: Twenty-one.

RE: Were you still at Sarah Lawrence?

BN: He was supposed to give a graduation speech at Sarah Lawrence. He died the day before.

RE: Oh my God!

BN: To be accurate, it actually wasn't the day before. I was graduating on a Monday and he died on a Friday night or Saturday morning. It was definitely a turning point in my life.

RE: How did his death affect Jenniemae?

BN: I have no idea. I do know that Jenniemae was at the service. She kept working for my mother until she became quite sick a couple of years later. When I was in Washington visiting my mother, I went to see Jenniemae. I remember going to her house and walking up these broken cement steps in a run-down kind of row house that they have in Southeast DC. It was very depressing. She was in her old bed. The picture on the cover of my book is not Jenniemae, but it looks so very much like her, and very much like the bed she had. The photo we used is a picture by Gordon Parks that was commissioned by the Farm Security Administration. Seeing her was so sad. She died within days after I visited. People ask me, "Well, where was she buried? Did you stay in touch with her family?" The answer is, "No." Do I feel guilty about that? The answer would be "Yes." But, it seems clear to me that for the most part, these relationships wherein people work in someone's household are one-sided. Particularly that was true when I was growing up, more so than now. The maids or nannies knew the families well, but the families didn't know them very well. The maids and nannies know both your clean and dirty laundry, in every sense, though you probably don't have much of an idea of their lives at all. In our case, Jenniemae clearly had a good sense of what made our family tick, but we knew very little about her family. Once Jenniemae died, we all went our separate ways. I was living in Colorado. There wasn't a real channel for me to try to stay in touch with Jenniemae's family. I didn't have a relationship with her family. I had a relationship with Jenniemae.

RE: I wonder, if the book becomes widely known, will people in Jenniemae's family come out of the woodwork and proclaim their relationship.

BN: Yes, I've wondered that. I've thought how old her family must be. Some of her siblings could be alive.

RE: Jenniemae's daughter would be younger than you, right?

BN: Right, by about ten years. She'd be in her mid-fifties. What happened to her? I don't know.

RE: As far as you know, that's Jenniemae's only child, right?

BN: Right. She had a boyfriend called John-John, but I don't know what happened to him. And then there was Elton Harris, who was also a big part of our household's life. He died, and curiously, in my own silent way, I celebrate his birthday every year in November. I don't go back to Washington except to see the therapist who saved my life. She still practices in the DC area. I acknowledged her in the book and sent her the manuscript, since she knew my parents quite well. She had been a colleague of my mother's, and she and her husband (who is deceased) were friends of my mother and my father, and had gone to dinner with them the night before my father died. I sent her the manuscript to say, "Is this the way you remember it? And what do you think about the way I've described my parents?" I've always taken very seriously the Gabriel García Márquez quote from *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: "Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it." That may be the best you can do in telling the story you have. I wanted her to verify that what I was saying about my mother and my father and Jenniemae had validity, and she said, "This is exactly Jenniemae, your father, and your mother."

RE: There are stories that I tell about my

childhood that I have embellished a little here and there to improve the story line. And now I can't remember what the embellishments were. So I could probably pass a lie detector test, but that doesn't mean that others would confirm the story the way I now remember it.

BN: Absolutely. It's what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it. What makes the stories interesting isn't necessarily that they are absolutely factual. It's much like what you do in your art, Ray. You take a photograph, and it is the factual outline, and then you create the sense and the sensibility and the color and the texture of that person. Isn't that what a memoir is? It's the way in which you recount it. It's the embellishment that makes it intriguing, even for the person writing it. You're trying to stick to what you remember, but, as you get older, the colors run.

RE: Yes. In fact, Chris Busa made a similar comment about the portrait series I'm doing. He said that I was continuing to produce *Provincetown Arts* in a different format.

BN: I think the whole memoir experience is about fascinating storytelling. I did the best I could to be factual, but every time I would get nervous about it I'd say, "Well, is this accurate?" and someone would respond, "It's the best you remember it." It may not be the way my brother remembers it, but then that is his story to tell. This is even true regarding a fresh experience you have today. The story you would tell about the experiences that you and your wife, Lee, have today would not probably be the same story that Lee would tell.

RE: Lee and I keep journals when we travel, and when we compare notes, we almost always emphasize different parts of the same story.

BN: Exactly.

RE: After your father died, how did coming to the Cape change for you?

BN: Everything changed for me after my father died. I love Aspen, where I have been living for a long time. I love the mountains, it is my home, it is where my neighborhood is, and my children have been born and raised in Aspen, and I'll probably always live there. But a part of my heart and soul are in Truro. My parents are both buried in Truro; I have long discussions with them at the Pine Grove Cemetery. The essence of my being in Truro didn't change after my father died, because I've always loved the people, the colors, the smell, the feel, and the sensibility of it. Over the last decade, particularly when we had to sell our parents' house, in some ways that was a bigger upheaval in terms of my relationship to Truro than the day or the year that either my father or my mother died. Though a family home is just a building, it is importantly, and always, a house of memories. Yet the essence of Truro remains the same for me—the sand and the water, and the people I see every summer that I love seeing. I am not very social. I love to write, and I love to paint, but I'm definitely a very private person.

RE: Who did you see most growing up in Truro?

BN: When I was really small, we saw the Kepes family the most. Their daughter, Judy Kepes, was



BROOKE IN CRANBERRY BOG, © 1950 COLLECTION BROOKE NEWMAN

one of my best friends. My parents were friends with Ed Dickinson and Bob and Ruth Hatch. Gilly Hatch was another good friend. As I got older I began to play tennis, and met people like Chris Busa and Sheldon Caldwell. I played tennis more and more and took tennis lessons in Provincetown and that became a focal point.

RE: Let's discuss Jenniemae's innate sense of mathematics and numbers. Did she literally win the "numbers" racket with some frequency, or was this part of the story you invented?

BN: I invented the dialogue, but the stories are the best I can remember them. Jenniemae did play the numbers that appeared in her dreams and she (as far as I knew) had a knack for winning. I don't think I could have made that tip. I look back and say, "Well, did she really win that often?" You read about people who win the five-million-dollar lottery three times. Maybe that was Jenniemae! I remember watching her on the phone making bets, and her excitement when she won more than once. I also remember people trying to get her to reveal her numbers, including my father.

RE: Can you imitate Jenniemae's voice?

BN: I can hear her voice. Imitate it? Not so much. I'm not like a John Irving or a Mary Karr, who can read their work with great aplomb. I can hear things very well in my mind, but can I say them aloud the way I can hear them? Doubtful. But I can hear Jenniemae, and I cannot tell you how many times I think about doing what Jenniemae said, "Listen on back."

RE: You might want to start practicing, because

when you do readings at bookstores you're going to have to deal with the dialogue.

BN: I know. I've had other people read it to me. I've had long conversations in my head with Jenniemae over the last few years. I take long walks up the mountain with my dog every morning and I'm always saying, "Listen on back, honey. Listen on back."

RE: After my parents died, I inherited a box full of movies that my father shot. They go back to 1933. In the box was one audiotape, made on the first little cheap home tape recorder my Dad purchased in the 1950s. I transferred the movies and the audiotape to CD-ROMs, and listened to the audio, not knowing what was on it. The tape contained dialogue from my father, mother, grandmother, and me—all of us experimenting with the tape recorder, in halting measured tones, sounding like Edison's early recordings. My father grew up in the Ukraine, and I could always hear his mixed Yiddish-Ukrainian accented English in my mind. And because he was a great raconteur and I've enjoyed telling stories about him, imitating his accent became part of my repertoire. But I was really shocked to hear what a strong Southern accent my mother had. She was born in San Antonio and grew up in Louisville. And her mother (my grandmother), Bertha Evans, came to live with us when she was around seventy-five or so. And on the tape, my father says, "Now Berta vil say a few voids." And she starts to say, "Mah naime is Bertha Ehvans. Ah'm livin' with mah daughter and mah son-in-law. Ah had mah own house in Lew-i-ville once." And then in the background you hear, "Aw, Mama, stop talkin' about that."

BN: That's so awesome. It's so fortunate.

RE: Do you have any tape recordings like that?

BN: No. I want to get the tapes from the math classes my father taught on television in the 1950s. The clearest recollection of his voice I have is from after dinner when he'd sit back and say, "Oi vey!"

RE: From reading your book, that would be one expression I would never associate with your father.

BN: Perhaps I didn't properly reflect his great sense of humor in the book.

RE: Was he friends with Lee Falk?

BN: Yes, they were. They liked each other a lot. The people on the Cape that he enjoyed included the Rossis, the Kepes family, Edmund Wilson, Ed Dickinson, and Phil Malicoat. My father was a lot older than Norman Mailer, who was part of the next generation of people coming along in the community, though Mailer played baseball with us sometimes.

RE: We haven't talked about your book *The Little Tern*, which I believe sold over a million copies.

BN: The little tern is me. A bird who thinks he has a broken wing, who thinks he cannot fly—but can. It took me many years to figure this one out.

RE: Did Michael Korda help you with *The Little Tern*?

BN: No. *The Little Tern* is not Michael's kind of book. He is a mentor and a friend, and a very honest person when it comes to what he likes

and does not like. He writes so effortlessly, unlike most of us.

RE: When you say that, do you mean it reads like he writes effortlessly, or he does write effortlessly?

BN: Michael has an ease with words. I don't think he has to write a chapter five times. Whereas I'm the kind of writer who puts everything on autopilot, and then goes back and says, "OK, so that needs to be rewritten and rewritten and then tweaked." I don't think that's true of a writer like Michael. He breathes a good paragraph. I do not.

RE: Your writing by no means seems labored to me. Your book flowed.

BN: I definitely am beholden to John Glusman, my editor.

RE: Have they made any substantial changes since I read the galleys?

BN: Oh, no. The story is what the story is. When I handed in the final manuscript, the one thing absolutely every interested editor asked was, "Would I be willing to write more about myself?" The original manuscript had less about me than is in there now. Clearly my hardest task was to write about myself. I wanted the story to be about them, and I didn't want to appear except as a narrator, but they insisted that I bear witness.

RE: You and I grew up during the sexual revolution, before AIDS was an inhibitor. The Outer Cape during the seventies and early eighties was a hotbed for experimentation. How did that impact your coming to terms with your parents behavior patterns?

BN: When I reflect on my family's history I can either say, "Well, I fought the riptide, or I could let it pull me along." We either spend our lives trying to get away from one thing or another, or we go with the flow. And I believe I did both, as most of us probably do. I left the East Coast, and what I believed were obstacles for me, but it turned out that much of the baggage found its way to Colorado!

RE: Baba Ramdas used to talk about people who move to get away from their problems—only to discover that they have taken their problems with them.

BN: So true. It took a lot of duct tape to get my life in order. But duct tape is remarkable and I am a very happy person now.

RAYMOND ELMAN started the Outer Cape Repertory Film Society in 1971, ran the To Be Coffeehouse from 1972 to 1973, and served for many years on the board of directors of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, the Provincetown Group Gallery, and the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater. He and Chris Busa cofounded Provincetown Arts in 1985. (Ray left the magazine in 1990, and in 1991 the magazine became a publication of the nonprofit Provincetown Arts Press.) His paintings have been widely exhibited and are included in numerous collections. His paintings of Stanley Kunitz and Alan Dugan are in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. (See www.raymondelman.com for more information.)

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Lies My Mother Never Told Me

By Kaylie Jones

HarperCollins, 2009

A BOOK REVIEW BY CAROL LAVELLE

SHARP AND ABRUPT as a gunshot that releases the pheasants from the veil of brush cover, this book is for Kaylie Jones that blast, that tumultuous thunderclap that releases the rain and cleanses the conflicted soul. And how the rains pour down in *Lies My Mother Never Told Me*! Jones delivers a bold and riveting memoir brimming with names and anecdotes that expose the underbelly of high society and define a snippet of time in American literature.

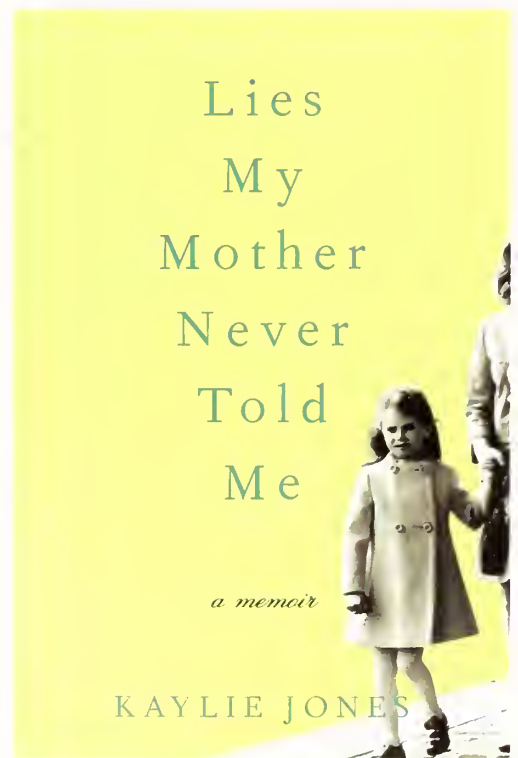
The story begins in France, just one block from the cathedral of Notre-Dame, where Jones resides with her newly adopted brother, Jamie, her mother, Gloria, and her father, the famous wartime writer James Jones. With a delivery that is both straightforward and yet daringly emblazoned with details and personalities that bring the story to life, the author re-creates the flurry of her young life in the epicenter of culture and sophistication—the social events, the drinking, the childhood anxieties, the drinking, the influential characters, the drinking, the drinking.

An artful and egregious tapestry of brief scenes and recollections that each unfurls with a prick of emotion, *Lies* is at its heart a memoir, a string of reconstructed happenstance laden with all the trappings of its genre, as when Jones describes the day she sat atop the shoulders of author James Baldwin at a civil rights march: “I don’t know if I remember the day, or if I remember my mother and Jimmy telling me about it.” Jones debunks the trappings

by imbuing her pages with brutal honesty, clarity, and blunt objectivity. She offers up scenes with James Jones that elicit unmatched love and respect, and scenes with Gloria Jones that elicit such tension and anguish as to strangle a life. At the heart of the book is the request by her father on his last day of life to “get your mother to stop drinking so much,” and the perpetual struggle for Jones to keep her promises, to her father and herself.

After the wrenching loss of her father, Jones moves through college and graduate school and discovers herself as a writer. She is at constant odds with her mother, trying to cling to her and break from her at the same time, respecting and defying her, despising her drinking, yet turning to drinking herself. After a party, a last drunken hurrah, Jones makes the courageous decision to begin the process of recovery. She crumbles the dichotomy that holds her and reaches her sobriety, an achievement she can share with her new husband, Kevin Heisler. Visiting Key West with Heisler and a friend of the James Jones Literary Society, Jones sees the world illuminated: “The sun’s red glow outshone the bar’s neon lights, the ocean spread out below it like a wrinkled blue silk sheet sprinkled with rubies.” Recounted on the page with the precision and emotion of an expert writer, she feels the hand of God for the first time.

Although Jones finds repose in her own sobriety, the same cannot be said for Gloria, whose body and mind are poisoned with alcohol. Steadfast in



the face of her mother’s cirrhosis, Jones enrolls in tae kwon do to strengthen and maintain her resolve. She and her daughter, Eyrna, blossom in class, and at long last, the story becomes the author’s—a story of strength and confidence and freedom from affliction—and Gloria, still holding a place of respect, is relegated to a place in history as Jones’s new life takes hold.

Lies My Mother Never Told Me is the story of a writer finding her voice and rejoicing in her own strength and fortitude. Amidst all the names and fame and anecdotes, Kaylie Jones emerges a woman of conviction—a daughter and mother and writer with a strength and confidence all her own. Taking time to share her thoughts while on tour, on campus, and online, Jones spoke with me about her journey and her life as a writer.

CAROL LAVELLE: When reconstructing a life through memoir, how would you define the reality? Is it the author’s? Is it a conglomeration of all the characters’ realities?

KAYLIE JONES: I would say the reality in a memoir is most definitely primarily the author’s. But so is history primarily written by historians who have a definite opinion on how things went. Which is why, in France, they have Austerlitz Boulevard and Train Station, and nothing anywhere is called Waterloo or Trafalgar. In England, everything is Waterloo this and Trafalgar that. It all depends on who won the battle! I tried to be as objective as possible in my memoir. I double- and triple-checked my memory of events against other people’s. Most of the time, I was correct in my overview of an event, if not in the particular details, which I filled in as I did my research. Sometimes I was off by a year or so with a date, and, if that happened, I made sure to correct it.

CL: Do you think that fiction hinders raw,

uninhibited emotion or exposes it more? Because the feelings can be disguised, perhaps the risk is less?

KJ: As a form I have always preferred fiction over memoir for this very reason. In fact, when I wrote *Lies*, I pretended I was writing a novel. This book had to be a memoir; no one would believe a word of it otherwise. Some people still don’t! People who were there and saw it with their own eyes! Fiction frees the writer from ever having to admit “this is true.”

CL: Do you think the event of your mother’s death gave you perspective? Or did you already have the perspective but now had the freedom to declare it?

KJ: I grieved the loss of my mother when I learned she was drinking again, and had been drinking again in secret for quite some time. That was in 2005. I had been in great denial myself for a long time and convinced myself that she could not possibly be drinking again. I went into a deep

depression that lasted about a month. Then, I got on with my life. My tae kwon do master helped me get a perspective on things. He was diagnosed with cancer just about at the same time as I learned my mother was drinking. I knew she was going to die, and that it would be slow, messy, and destructive. I decided I didn’t want to wallow in self-pity and I followed my tae kwon do master’s example instead: I showed up, regardless. Once my mother died, I felt like I’d survived some kind of cataclysm. It was truly horrendous. Alcoholism doesn’t just affect the alcoholic, but sends shock waves outwards and affects everyone involved. She divided and destroyed the nucleus of our family. Her death most definitely gave me the freedom to declare my side of the story. Children of alcoholics are ridden with feelings of guilt and shame and, most of the time, silence is imposed on them. Writing this memoir, speaking the truth as I saw it, gave me a great sense of empowerment.

CL: Did you have to subdue or tone down your emotion for *Lies*?



KAYLIE JONES

KJ: The first draft was more raw than later drafts. I set out with the intention of controlling and containing outbursts of emotion. I can't stand memoirs that judge the situation for the reader, or preemptively announce what is going on or what the reader should feel. That is why I tried to write this book as if I were writing a novel. With as much of an absence of judgment as I could manage. Once I was in the "art" of it, in the creation process, it was much easier to contain and control my emotions. Art first, and always. Emotionality and hysteria has no place in good writing.

CL: In the introduction to *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries*, you say that on the movie set, a table "held a silver tea set my father had inherited from his mother. But of course it was not really our table, or our tea set. Dreams are like this." How much of your details in a piece of fiction are real anyway?

KJ: Memory shifts things. This has happened to me several times: I've gone back to a place that I think I remember very well, only to find that in my mind the walls are a different color, or the doors are not where I remembered them. In my writing, when I reconstruct memories, I am certain that these kinds of shifts happen. But that's okay. Then, I'll surprise myself completely with the accuracy of

a description I've written from memory, from years ago, and it will be spot-on. Like the little red wallet my dad took off the Japanese soldier he killed in hand-to-hand combat on Guadalcanal. I'd only seen it once in my life, yet my memory was very close to the real thing, which resides in the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

CL: What liberties do you enjoy when writing fiction? Memoir?

KJ: In fiction, writers are not restricted to the truth as it happened. Sometimes the facts don't add up to a good story. The memoir writer has to pick and choose the structure, which facts belong in the structure, and which don't. That is the fun part, and the hard part, of memoir writing.

CL: In which genre do the ghosts of your life, the true essence of the people you knew and loved, reach their zenith?

KJ: I don't know, to be honest. Time will tell. Many of my favorite writers romanticize their characters, whether they are based on real people, a composite, or totally invented. Writers have a certain way of looking at life, I think. But I am going back to fiction. I think I only have two memoirs in me. This one, which is finished, and the story of my teaching and writing, which are completely intertwined.

CL: How did you verify your information for *Lies*?

KJ: First of all, I split the witness list into two categories: drunks and non-drunks/former drunks. That already helped me to determine whose memories were going to be the most reliable. Then, I went to the documents. My father's life is very well documented, he saved everything! His papers are already catalogued in several universities, so I was able to check my knowledge against hard evidence. Photographs were hugely helpful. As I was writing the memoir, some part of my mind kept telling me that I was exaggerating, that my mother really wasn't that bad an alcoholic. That she maybe didn't start drinking till later in her life. Then I went to the photographs. In approximately 95 percent of the photos, she's holding a drink. And that's going way back to the late fifties—a telling detail, in my opinion.

CL: In the introduction to *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries*, you say that "every person in my

family remembers the events differently, from his or her own point of view." Whose view would you say is closest to your own in your memoir?

KJ: My brother and I had a very different relationship with our mother. But, in the end, he saw the truth of how difficult she'd been with me, and he realized that in the end our mother was totally incapacitated by alcohol. I trust his judgment and his memory, so I relied on him a lot. He has been a staunch supporter of me and of my book.

CL: Could anyone have helped your mother?

KJ: The only person who could have helped my mother is my mother.

CL: Which memoirist do you feel your style most resembles?

KJ: There are people who write a memoir because they have a story to tell. They survived something, or they witnessed something. They are not writers. Then, there are writers who choose to write a memoir, like Nick Flynn, or Joan Didion, or Primo Levi, or Varlam Shalamov. I hope I am in the second category. I'm a writer first, a writer who felt she had a story to tell that needed to be told without the added protection, or buffer, of the word "fiction." This book would have had no impact if I'd written it as a novel. I've already written it as a novel, actually, several times, from different angles. It wasn't enough.

CL: Was the memoir difficult to structure? Pare down?

KJ: I didn't worry about the structure on the first pass, I just wrote. I imposed a structure on it later, and ended up cutting quite a few pages. Then, my editor, Henry Ferris, cut more pages and made the book even more linear. It needed his professional touch. Since I am a novelist, this foray into memoir was new for me, and I tended to put in too much information, which I didn't realize was not necessary. In a novel, I would've known this. In a memoir, I felt I had to back up my story with infinite detail, to insure that the reader would believe me.

CL: How do you think fiction and memoir work to influence the culture, or future generations?

KJ: This could be a PhD thesis right here. I think our society has moved toward memoir because of reality-based TV and Internet live-feed. Fiction doesn't feel like enough to most people, because they don't think it's "real." It's as real as it gets, in my opinion. I just spent two days with the brilliant novelist Tim O'Brien, a Vietnam veteran and survivor, who believes fundamentally that fiction is truer than fact, especially when depicting calamities such as war. I'm with him there. I think it's terrible that as a society we've become so used to horror and violence that we want more of it; we want it real, and we want it now, happening in real time, and the more awful the better. It's like a return to the Roman circus. God help us all.

CAROL LAVELLE is a teacher and writer working in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. She holds a BS in Education from Penn State University and an MFA in Creative Writing from Wilkes University.

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Poets House Opens in Lower Manhattan

By Genine Lentine

IN AN EARLY SPRING day in 2005, Stanley Kunitz, a few months shy of his hundredth birthday, joined Lee Briccetti, Margo Viscusi, and his daughter, Gretchen Kunitz, for a walk over a muddy plot of open ground in lower Manhattan, the site of the new Poets House. Talk was speculative—the reading room will be about here; this is where the children's room will be; from the conference room window, you'll be able to see the Statue of Liberty. On this brisk day, in this company, so strong was the palpable charge of a vision about to take on physical form that it might have been possible to feel the contours of the building already offering shelter, to catch the glint of sun off the glass, though no glass was yet visible.

In the Zen koan "The World-Honored One Points to the Ground," the Buddha is walking along in a landscape that may as well be lower Manhattan with Indra, emperor of the gods—most familiar for the image of the jeweled net whose facets reflect infinitely off each other, a symbol of interconnection resonant of the "web of creation" Stanley Kunitz frequently invoked: "Touch it at any point and the whole web trembles." The Buddha pauses, let's say, just west of the West Side Highway, and points to the ground. "This is a good place to build a sanctuary," he remarks. Indra plucks a blade of grass, sticks it in the ground, and says, "The sanctuary is built."

One way to read this koan is as a reminder that sanctuary is always at hand—also a fundamental premise of poetry—but it is also a statement about the capacity to see fruition when looking at a seed. As, for example, how the gesture of placing a slim volume on a shelf in the Home Economics room

at the High School for the Humanities in Chelsea over two decades ago led inexorably to Maggie Balistreri, the librarian who now curates the Poets House collection, placing a new volume on the shelf in this expansive new reading room in 2010.

As a child, Stanley Kunitz longed for sanctuary, a place of kindred connection. He helped create two different such homes for "the heart's affections," one in Provincetown, the Fine Arts Work Center, and one in New York, Poets House, which he cofounded with Elizabeth Kray in 1985. Poets House, now a fifty-thousand-volume poetry library and literary center, occupied a loft space in Soho for almost twenty years, and, last fall, opened its street-level doors at 10 River Terrace, a green multi-use residential building in lower Manhattan's Battery Park City, designed by Polshek Partnership (who also designed the Rose Center for Earth and Space, a favorite destination for Kunitz).

Setting a standard of what collaboration, intention, unstinting effort, and sheer faith can bring about, the Poets House two-floor space, designed by architect Louise Braverman, is a meta-statement, a long gently arcing thoroughfare that dismantles whatever imagined impossibility you might have carried in with you, and that says to the high school student pondering over a line, "this matters." Poet and memoirist Mark Doty commented, "People who have been around the poetry world for a while are used to such compromise: the church basement, the grotty corner of the school, the unwanted closet that becomes the poetry center—so to have this space that is so full of light! Everything, the beautiful colors they've chosen, the artwork, the vibrating evidence of Stanley's dedication to the place. His artwork, the broadsides, the objects—I just love that those are there." Doty recently brought an undergraduate class from Rutgers for a visit, and said that for

many of his students, the experience was pivotal: "They had this look of children for whom a large lustrous door had opened."

Poet Galway Kinnell, speaking at one of the grand opening readings, told the assembled crowd, "I'm quite moved to be here at this institution of this great project that's been brewing a long time, particularly because long ago I talked to Stanley Kunitz and Betty Kray, who were concocting this thing, full of confidence that it would come into existence, and so it has, maybe even beyond their dreams."

As part of a public amenities program of the Battery Park City Authority, Poets House will occupy this sparkling eleven thousand square foot space rent-free through 2069, and one hopes for long thereafter. Well, not totally free—the lease actually stipulates the price of ten dollars for the six decades. That works out to seventeen cents a year, saving an estimated sixty million dollars, which can now go to programs and services.

James Cavanaugh, President and CEO of the Battery Park City Authority, speaking at the grand opening, said that the Authority's board was "well-impressed at the prospect of fifty thousand volumes of poetry, rare and precious video recordings, audio recordings, all free, available to the public," and said they'd be "even more impressed if Poets House could come up with the dollars." The board set a goal for the build-out and endowment, and Poets House initiated a capital campaign to raise 11.2 million with 2.5 million of the total for cash reserves and endowment. As of this writing, they have succeeded in raising 9.8 million and the campaign continues.

Poets House Executive Director Lee Briccetti and the staff, many of whom, like Briccetti, are poets themselves, sustained a massive effort over the six years of the project, managing to keep



POETS HOUSE EXHIBITION SPACE

programming continuous despite the fact that they were denied a renewal of their lease at 72 Spring Street and, therefore, in 2008, had to put the library in storage until moving into the new space.

If, as Keats suggests, the mark of the poet is the ability to navigate uncertainty, this is also a quality the staff has drawn upon in abundance to establish this "place for poetry." Margo Viscusi, President Emerita of the Poets House Board of Directors, and Co-chair for the Capital Campaign, told me, "We had a whole staff and a whole Board who were floating on that little boat trying desperately to get to shore. It really was Stanley's vision that kept us going all along. In the early years, when there were tough moments, we would just go to him, have a martini, and leave with some renewed energy and vision. 'You can do it, you can do it,' he would always tell us. In the later years and after his death,

remembering this gave us that charge again. We couldn't let him down."

Briccetti, who, as a Tribeca resident, had long ago noticed poetry engraved in a fountain in Battery Park, has seen the project through with extraordinary aplomb, dedication, and panoramic acuity. She summarizes the ornate challenges of the six-year process this way: "The goal was to have sustainability so we could put our money, our resources into the things we really love, inviting people to connect with poetry in a new way. Given our long relationship with BPC producing poetry events in the park, this amazing opportunity feels very organic. And now, here we are, and the happiness begins. Real estate waning; poetry rising."

Jane Preston, Managing Director, who worked closely on the the green aspects of this space, explained, "It's part of our mission to broaden the

dialogue about poetry in the culture and it's such a wonderful opportunity for us to make real our mission, to explore how issues of greenness intersect with poetry."

The centerpiece of this "place for poetry" is, of course, the fifty-thousand-volume Reed Foundation Library, an open stack collection. Stephen Motika, Program Coordinator, commented, "I think of community in the sense of sociability and programming and courses and talking and human interaction, but you can also come and enter the community of books. There are people who are here every day

who don't say a word, but they read and they write and they're in a community that's in the stacks and in the collection and I love that. I love that the library is really open and it feels like it's spilling into the world now. It feels like its arms are open and anyone can come in and be here. You're looking out on the world; you're looking out on the river, on the harbor, at the tip of this great universe. It's very inspiring."

Poets House offers hundreds of public programs, panels, lectures, readings, writing workshops, and walking tours in New York City and nationwide, and now they have a dedicated reading hall, named fittingly for Elizabeth Kray, who was instrumental in establishing many poetry reading series in New York. The hall is fully outfitted with cutting-edge technology enabling Poets House to archive and broadcast events readily. The ground-floor space opens out onto an outdoor amphitheatre, and has a strikingly similar feeling to the Stanley Kunitz Common Room at the Fine Arts Work Center in its scale, easy flow, and proximity to the elements.

Carlin Wragg, Community Relations Manager, has been overseeing the project of digitizing the Poets House audio and video collection. Currently, a visitor can check out an iPod and listen to readings and other programs from the Poets House archive. Wragg commented that "for Poets House, we've been building this space that has allowed us to now be poised to explore what space means in the virtual sense by providing access to these recordings. I think community is a fascinating word in the digital age. Where you once thought of community as really localized, it's now able to be international. People can have a conversation as well. It's not just that they can get the content, but they can talk about it with each other."

Also on the ground floor is the Constance Laibe Hays Children's Room, an enchanting and spacious light-filled haven, which seems to be almost a continuation of the playground in Nelson Rockefeller Park. Mike Romanos, the Children's Room Coordinator, showed me the reading "nest or nook" under the stairs, explaining that it will have a plush green rug surrounded by pillows that look like stones, and the wall will be painted with a river mural.

Already thousands of children have come through on field trips and on visits with their parents. The room, furnished with vintage schoolhouse furniture, has the perfect balance of enclosure and freedom, creating a lively and inviting launch for exploration. The deep windowsills are lined with manual typewriters, including Stanley Kunitz's pale green Hermes. Kids can type out poems on index cards in response to curiosities, which are then organized by categories in the drawers that once housed the card catalog. "The kids absolutely love the typewriters," Mike said. "They've never seen them before. I think Stanley would be happy. It's so tactile. Some of the kids are so small they can't hit the keys hard enough, so I help them."

An estimated thirty thousand visitors are expected to come through the space in the first year. Lee Briccetti spoke of creating "an envelope of friendship and inviting people in," and it is this



CONSTANCE LAIBE HAYS CHILDREN'S ROOM



POETS HOUSE READING ROOM

spirit of inclusivity that is the common thread many people mention when they speak of Poets House. Poet Marie Howe told me, "It's the people there. There's no group of people like the people at Poets House. I think of them as thinking hearts, just these openhearted welcoming people. Every tribe is welcome. Every aesthetic is welcome."

Bill Murray, a strong supporter of Poets House, who regularly joins the yearly Bridge Walk over the Brooklyn Bridge, visited the building site and read some poems and spoke with the construction crew on their break. (If you'd like to hear Bill Murray reading Emily Dickinson—and it's not to be missed—you can find a video of this visit on YouTube.) Murray concluded by saying, "This site, I know you all feel it when you come here, I know I feel it when I come down here. The fact that it's going to be here is a pretty nice piece of bliss; it's a little bit of balm, it's the hope that comes out of the end of Pandora's Box."

The proximity to the World Trade Center site he alludes to here, and the restorative powers of poetry he invokes, brings to mind these lines from Brenda Hillman's poem "The Late Cold War":

Sir, when I think of poetry keeping you alive
I know
you were entered by incomprehensible light
in the hour of lemon & water

& the great wound of the world has slipped
a code
into your shoe

A poem doesn't fail when you set your one
good wing on the ground

It is the wing
It doesn't abandon you

Marie Howe remarked, "I wish there would be a big arrow over it from the sky, a neon sign blinking, 'All ye who are weary and in want of rest, all ye who want solitude in the city: here here, stop here. Pull in here and rest.' Especially in New York. The aura goes out into the city. I always felt that way. When Poets House first opened on Spring Street, I loved knowing that no matter what was happening, there was this space that was safe and beautiful and calm. There's a sense of collective attention. That sense of quiet, a reading room. What's sweeter than a reading room? It's a sanctuary just knowing it [is here.]"

The new Poets House, one wing of a V it shares with the New York Public Library, articulates in glass Kunitz's signature quote: "I dream of an art so transparent that you can look through it and see the world." It is also the expression of its inverse: to look through the world, exactly as it is, and see poetry. It is at this point of intersection, in this traffic of the relative and absolute, of vision and unsparing commitment, of joint compound, RFPs, and tetrameter couplets, that this light-filled space stands, its doors open to the street.

GENINE LENTINE's chapbook Mr. Worthington's Beautiful Experiments on Splashes is just out from New Michigan Press. Her poems, essays, and interviews have appeared in American Poetry Review, American Speech, Ninth Letter, O: The Oprah Magazine, Tricycle, and Shambhala Sun. The Wild Braid: A Poet Reflects on a Century in the Garden, a collaboration with Stanley Kunitz and photographer Marnie Crawford Samuelson, was published by W. W. Norton in 2005. She's currently working on a collection of essays called Love Serenade. Ongoing public projects include Listening Booth and the Heinous Task Table. She is the Artist in Residence at the San Francisco Zen Center for 2009-10.



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The Fine Arts Work Center:

Glimpses

By Roger Skillings

The following are excerpts from a longer history in progress.

EVERYONE REMEMBERS their first experience of the Fine Arts Work Center.

In November 1969 the first writing Fellows went to Executive Secretary Ruth Hiebert's house to meet Stanley Kunitz. He was late. The seven waited awkwardly, seeing the lights of Truro across the bay, hearing the wind and the waves. Keith Althaus confided his ambition, once he got famous, always to wear a fishhook suit—yes, made entirely of fishhooks—and to carry a briefcase with a pack of Pall Malls in it. He said he was in the poetry business for the money.

Mr. Kunitz arrived, apologizing, sat on the couch among them. "Welllll..." he said, reaching for his drink. "What'll we talk about? What do you all think about death?"

Talk ran off like a cockeyed dog, shedding a sense of excitement and dislocation, originality, intensity, companionable laughter. Late, late in the evening, when the bright light had settled over everything, Margaret Murray yelled at Stanley, "You polish it like a jewel!"

Later still, it was found to be three o'clock. Amazed, the seven got up and filed out. Ruth beamed at each of them. As they went down the stairs Stanley leaned over the banister and called in a thrilling voice, cracking and old, "Goodnight, my darlings, goodnight, my darlings."

From the first he seemed ancient. He would be with us until his century's end in 2007.

BILL EVAUL COULD DRAW BETTER than anybody in his high school, but according to his guidance counselor and parents, art was but a hobby. Contrary views unavailing, he agreed to premed, providing the college had lots of electives in art and was situated in a drinking-age-of-18 state, so he chose Syracuse University.

Four years later, in 1970, the day after graduation, his truck packed with paintings, at the last moment he swung by the house of a friend, also just leaving. At the last second though, the friend left his van engine running and dashed back to check his mail one last time, found an application to the Fine Arts Work Center, which he tossed to Bill with disdain. The application sat on Bill's dashboard all the way home to New Jersey, and there it remained, catching his eye. He'd never heard of the Fine Arts Work Center—neither had anyone else—but having no prospects he finally made some slides, sent them off, and forgot them. Mid-September came a call from Myron Stout, who read him his acceptance. Could he come to Provincetown for seven months? Well... sure.

When the day came, Bill's van had developed engine troubles. Not even his motor-head friends could get it going again, so he borrowed his grandmother's brand-new Buick, which blew up in

Marshfield, just blew up, totaled, no known cause. He had it towed away and hitchhiked to the door of 135 Bradford Street with nothing but a satchel, was met by Ghee Patrick, who drove him to Fish Pan Alley, and said, "Just follow the path. Go right at the fork. Once you're out of the woods, make a beeline for the shack with two chimneys."

She didn't mention the terrain, the brambles, and the briars, but he got there somehow, a bit tattered, in the middle of the dune party. This was October 1, 1970. He never heard of his friend again, and he never left Provincetown.

"Fritz Bultman, Jim Forsberg, Myron Stout, Tony Vevers, they were the greatest, the best you could imagine," Bill said, "they were all accessible." One time he knocked on Myron's door at 4 Brewster Street. Myron said, "This is an occasion, we must have dinner."

"Had it been Jim, he would have said, 'Let's go to the Fo's's'le.' Jim was the most active in making you work. Myron put one at ease, and the blessing would flow."

GAIL AND MIKE MAZUR spent summers in Mashpee. Gail was running Blacksmith House in Cambridge. Fellow David Rivard invited her to read at the Work Center, where she and Mike had never been. It was the cold Easter week of 1985. There was a potluck dinner, which seemed to consist chiefly of broccoli. Apparently there were weekly potlucks, and visitors always got one, whatever the day, so occasionally the culinary inspiration ran low.

She and Mike spent that night in Studio #10, cold and empty except for a bed with a deep sag in the middle and a cat, whose standing with the Fellows had repealed the No Pets Policy. They put the mattress on the floor and the cat out—Mike being asthmatic—and slipped if not slept under a pile of blankets coated with cat hairs, rose with the sun, walked down Pearl Street in the biting cold, saw the splendid, shining bay, "and were gone from Mashpee," Gail said.

The raw plainness of 24 Pearl Street, the vitality and seriousness of its people were unlike anything, anywhere else. They came down again that summer to hear Stanley read at the Long Point Gallery during his eightieth birthday celebration. It was a great reading—as which of his was not? They were impressed by the elderly bohemians—they seemed incredibly alive, and the older they looked the more alive they seemed. The large gathering was casual, animated, amicable, old friends all, and they stayed long in conversation, walking about, looking at the paintings.

They spent the next two summers in the late Fritz and Jeanne Bultman's cottage, then bought 561 Commercial Street. Thus the Work Center

gained two of its most consequential Trustees. Gail and Mike were to serve on the Writing and Visual Arts Committees, Gail as Chair in 1991 and '92. Mike would launch the New Provincetown Print Project in 1989, in honor of Provincetown's experimental printmakers in the early years of the twentieth century, who pioneered the White Line Woodcut.

His aim was to raise money, act as outreach to artists and museums around the country, spread FAWC renown, and galvanize our lackluster summers of random rentals to anyone willing or able to claim some relation to the arts.

But it did vastly more, it served as precedent for innovations that led to the Summer Workshops, the Low Residency MFA Program in the Visual Arts in partnership with the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, and ultimately to the building of the Link with its state-of-the-art print shop, twice the size of the old one, upgraded and available to other artists on the Lower Cape, adding a new dimension to Provincetown as haven for the arts.

For twenty years Mike's leadership, drive, genius, and fame, his inexhaustible energies, high spirits, and generation of new ideas, his eloquence and irreverent wit kindled and rekindled the damps of institutional inertia, all bestowed without cease or stint. Impossible to imagine the Fine Arts Work Center of today absent those creative fires.

On July 11, 2009, by Board acclamation, the Michael Mazur Print Shop was so named. In his final weeks he made one hundred tender, adventurous, exquisite pen-and-ink drawings in his gardens in Cambridge and Provincetown. "Fragile flowers by a fragile man," he called them, this titan. He was about to begin a new project of prints the day he died, August 18, age seventy-three.

AMID BLACK HEADLINES of the late sixties and early seventies, Fellows found themselves part of a rollicking influx of dropouts, cop-outs, migrants of all kinds, refugees from the war, from rat race and city, from college, job, and home, from respectability and materialism, from the unfreedom of everywhere else. The gay increase quickened, though homophobia persisted. The sedate women at the secluded Ace of Spades were left to smoke their pipes in peace. Alert police visitations broke up men ostentatiously dancing together, arrested one young blood garbed only in the flag the night Nixon mined Haiphong Harbor—but as gay economic clout grew, overt enmity faded. Rents remained cheap and plentiful, people still fell in love with the place and the life, and stayed on, eking out a living, gladly quit of encumbering amenities and hollow conventions, to wake up one year to find they were still here, unfit for life



IN FRONT OF THE BINS AT THE
FINE ARTS WORK CENTER c. 1979

anywhere else, and proud of it. Persuaded to put his head in the door of Piggy's, one visiting father was heard to say, "Don't see many folks like this in Sandusky."

The *Advocate* could be bought on the street on Thursdays from newspaper boys and girls. Originally the Methodist Church, the Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., Museum, for lack of parking, decamped to Norfolk, Virginia, in 1971, is now, thanks to the preserving campaigns of Josephine Del Deo, the Provincetown Library, fantastic, final berth of Flyer Santos's half-scale model of the *Rose Dorothea*, winner of the Lipton Cup in 1907, which rigors snapped her top foremast, which meant more days of lost fishing for Captain Marion Perry, nee Pereira—whose wife had made him race her eponymous schooner—though he cared naught for the cup she coveted, nor for the wild celebrations either; and, without stopping to tip his derby hat, which he wore instead of the gold-braided cap she'd sent him to sea with, he made for the feeble spar-makers to flay them into speedy amends.

The Fo'c's'le was the washashore living room. Reggie Cabral's Atlantic House and Piggy's at 67 Shankpainter Road; the midtown Back Room; and Rosy's in the far East End at various times all had pack-jammed dance scenes. A drop-in center at 6 Gosnold Street offered free medical help, counseling, and *Physicians' Desk Reference* info for such as came in at 3 a.m. with pill in palm to say, I just took a whole bunch of these that I just found in this coat that I borrowed, what are they? The nightly rendezvous and workout of the exuberant dance-bar culture rocked on in its moment that could envisage no end. A free university flourished, with courses that showed the expertise and/or exotic knowledge of the washashore town. Participatory Democracy were the magic words wherein redemption of the future lay, and in the winter of '72 answered the chaos and disillusion of the times with a full-scale production of *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*, directed by

Edmund Di Stasi, staged at the Art Association. Fellow Louis Postel started a magazine, *Provincetown Poets*, that raced through five issues. A men's basketball league drew players from as far away as Wellfleet, and a men's softball league fielded teams sponsored by the Provincetown Police, Spiritus Pizza, Café Blase, and the Air Force Early Warning Station in Truro. The Bum's Picnic at Beech Forest Pond in the spring was like a large family celebration with babies, kids, dogs, fiddles, bongos, and all you could eat, drink, or smoke. For a day or two in June, on the side streets, still was heard a grizzled man crying, "Strawww Berr Rees, Strawww Berr Rees," and housewives came out to buy. Rape was common, women's CR groups roiled the status quo, but though the country was queried from coast to coast by Chief James Meads, the nearly decapitated, handless woman of the dunes never regained her name. In the men's room of the Old Colony Tap, from the agonies of the lost *Patricia Marie* and *Captain Bill*, slashed on the wall in white paint, was the defiant swagger—almost incomprehensible today—*Whiskey Bent & Hell Bound*. Music was everywhere like bursts of oxygen. Paranoid dope peddlers drove brand-new Porsches. Garbage was collected twice a week, and there was a pay phone in the Common Room, where the FAWC office is now.

In those days, when the winter population of the town was at its peak, acclimated Fellows were loath to leave at all, even for a day. Many years later one would say, "When I've been away and I first come over the hill at Pilgrim Spring at night and see those lights, my heart still starts to pound."

In later epochs of the empty town, skeptics met the common response, "Well, I guess you had to be here." Natives call—or used to call—those lights the diamond necklace.

ON THE AFTERNOON of November 27, 1974, hard on the heels of visits by Tom Lux and Greg Orr, Robert Creeley arrived for six days, and said, "Not to start a binge or anything, but is there anywhere we can get a drink around here?"

At 1:30 a.m. or so, walking back to the Work Center from the Fo'c's'le, Creeley gave a cop-car the finger. They stopped, hopped out, and said, "What's that?" Creeley said, "I was just giving you the finger, man." One said, "I don't like your attitude." Creeley said, "Who are you? I mean, who are you? I mean, man, who *are* you?" Keith Althaus stood a little to one side, bending between, saying, "We're just on our way home, officer," Roger Skillings yelling, "Home, home, home," in a parody of obedience, figuring they were all on their way to jail and how funny, if not totally fortunate, that one of the cops was one of the cops he'd been embroiled with only a month previous.

Somehow nothing happened, one of the many miracles of those manic days when no one used the word *police*. The next night Creeley read to an enthusiastic full house of seventy-five in the Hudson D. Walker Gallery, the applause so prolonged that he got into an empathetic clapping fit, and wouldn't stop, but led a group of Fellows clapping from bar to bar till somebody said that his hands looked like catcher's mitts, and he quit in surprise—though later, much later, alone on the street, having outlasted all his companions, he met with the cops again, and spent the night in jail.

The next day Gregory Corso, gnarled energy in a green suit, turned up in Truro at the house of Judy Shahn and Alan Dugan, who, adept at this sort of thing, after a few drinks, to part with him, took him to the Fo'c's'le, and slipped away home. At 7 a.m. Thanksgiving morn, Keith and Roger, looking for liquor for Corso and Creeley, found half a gallon of vodka at Mother Marion's, thence to the New World Deli, where, courtesy of Marsha Wolfe, they went upstairs to her apartment, which was being renovated, where there were said to be a thousand boxes of shoes—though none were ever spied.

There, sitting on piles of sheetrock and boards, with a commercial-size dill pickle jar full of orange juice, they drank screwdrivers, while Corso told Creeley of his trip to Munich, where he'd "trashed the pad" of a traveling poet and "balled his Brunn-

Idle then began heaping abuse on Creeley's deadpan factotums, who, truth to tell, had never seen Corso's like, and listened with polite bemusement as he grew ever more scurrilous.

Small entertainment found there, the talk turned to poetry. Creeley with an air of a grandee said, "We've done everything, what'll we do next, what's left?" and a strange silence fell, the words rang forlorn, and even Corso for a moment looked at a loss.

But in and around these escapades, Robert Creeley was a great visitor, and a friend indeed of the Fine Arts Work Center. He spent lots of time with the Fellows, dined with them, read their manuscripts, poetry and prose alike, and talked life and writing tirelessly, drunk or sober, hours on end, till they wore out. He was always the last to bed, and wrote upon leaving that he "had never truly been among a company more active and more uniquely constituted."

ON SUNDAY, October 3, 1970, occurred the first of the greatest of Work Center events, which became an annual Fellows' introduction to the Provincelands of the National Seashore: the party at Phil Malicoat's shack in the dunes, twenty yards from the sea, on the Back Shore, that he and his son, Conrad, had built in 1959.

No one who has not explored it by foot can imagine the stark beauty of the dunes rising suddenly and steep from the woods, then rolling away to the glittering sea. From the heights above the forest at Snail Road, at their furthest edge of advance,

wind-shredded tops of buried oaks protrude from the sand like tattered battle flags. As you start down the far side of the first dune the sea vanishes, replaced by lowlands patched with beach rose billows, threads of gleaming poison ivy, and scattered clans of dwarf pitch pine, their generations lying desiccated and grey around them. Elusive paths end in impenetrable thickets of beachplum, bayberry, bearberry, oak, sassafras, shadbush, and low bush blueberry, often laced with bright greenbrier, causing detours and lost bearings—the top of the Pilgrim Monument seems to float, never moor where last seen. Cranberry bogs appear and sweet little glens, rippling fields of compass grass silvered in the wind, then dunes again against the sky, the only sound the chuffing of feet in the sand, where shadows of swooping swallows streak so fast they dip unseen behind the next rise. Delicate, white rodent bones repose in the open solitude, trace of snake wavers from nowhere to nowhere, far from the haven of tufted hummocks, nearly unsalable summits of this fantastic Deserta Arabia, its parabolic heights beetling above the beach, all laid out beneath the exhilarating light and scouring wind.

Malicoat had moved from Indiana to Provincetown in 1929 to study with Charles Hawthorne, then Edwin Dickinson, and came to epitomize the sage contentment and smiling simplicity of Provincetown life and its beloved landscape.

He had never joined the pursuit of fame or fashion. He loved paint and the good life in a remote, casual town couched in a nearly impervious paradise, virtually an island blessed with tranquil

harbor, vast bay, and open ocean. Pleasures of family, the cello, chess, the Art Association, the society of the Beachcombers, the weather—for him these things sufficed, happily.

The laity though seemed to expect rowdy parties. "People," Phil observed, "think artists are like wild men from Borneo, but they're not, they're really the most conservative people in the world. All they want is to be left alone to work in peace and quiet."

In 1976, when he wanted to put a longtime, local landscape painter on the Work Center jury, he was told the NEA would flip. The artist was too provincial. "Provincial!" Phil scoffed, as vehement as he ever got, albeit with his characteristic smile. "I always thought provincial was a good thing."

When his heart went bad, he got a pacemaker implanted. At a dune party one year he opened his shirt to a curious Fellow, who asked what he would do if it failed, and received that same smile, a little broader than usual, and the answer: "I guess we'll just let nature take its course."

The Boys from Indiana, as they were called, Phil, Bruce McKain, and George Yater had spent their painting lives in Provincetown. New York meant nothing to them but outlandishness, unlike Jim Forsberg, who had turned his back on it, to recast his lot with rustication. Fritz Bultman and Jack Tworckov, Chair of the Art Department at Yale, had cordial relations with the great city. Myron Stout was a special case, seldom leaving town, nonetheless revered by the cognoscenti. His first retrospective at age seventy-one, which

opened in February 1980 at the Whitney Museum of American Art—fortunately during the Fellowship year—remains a great and unparalleled event in Work Center annals.

Phil Malicoat's solid serenity set a certain tone, as of the honored genius of the place . . . and there was something to be said for his point of view, even for a Provincetown School of Painting, as Sal Del Deo suggested, but history made nil of it. The artists died or moved away, and the next generation was evicted or barred from paradise by the real-estate boom.

Raphael Soyer (1899–1987) told Gail and Mike Mazur, "I don't think ours is an age for painting . . . ours is an age of technology; there's no great painting."

On August 16, 1979, the end of the old world was signaled at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors with the resignations of Jim Forsberg and Phil Malicoat. The last act of that day was a change in the By-laws of the term Director to Trustee, "a more appropriate term when used in reference to a nonprofit corporation."

ROGER SKILLINGS was a Fellow in 1969–70 and 1970–71. Presently, he is Chairman of the Writing Committee of the Fine Arts Work Center. His seven books include the classic P-town Stories.



MICHAEL MAZUR

1935–2009

"For twenty years Mike's leadership, drive, genius, and fame, his inexhaustible energies, high spirits, and generation of new ideas, his eloquence and irreverent wit kindled and rekindled the dampens of institutional inertia, all bestowed without cease or stint. Impossible to imagine the Fine Arts Work Center of today absent those creative fires. . . .

In his final weeks he made one hundred tender, adventurous, exquisite pen-and-ink drawings in his gardens in Cambridge and Provincetown. 'Fragile flowers by a fragile man,' he called them, this titan. He was about to begin a new project of prints the day he died, August 18, age seventy-three."

Michael Mazur's work will be exhibited at the Barbara Krakow Gallery this fall (September 11–October 20).

Looking Back: A Provincetown Memoir

By Hilary Masters

IT IS JULY 1950. A bunch of us sit in the front windows of the Old Colony, sipping our beers and gawking at the tourists who pass outside on the street. They gawk at us. Most of us are veterans of the big war that had just ended a few years back, so the news from Korea has an unsettling effect. *North Korea invades South Korea*. Yeah, and tomorrow, someone cracks, *West Korea is going to invade East Korea*. Then *Northeast Korea jumps into Southwest Korea* and everything goes to hell. Much laughter.

Harry Truman initiates his “police action” and a lot of those guys in the front windows are sorry they entered the Reserve lists of their particular service branch in order to get into civilian life sooner, because that contract also means they can be called back, put back into uniform and into Korea—whatever part of it. For some reason I had checked the box for “Regular” on my navy discharge so I was immune to being called up. I was washing dishes in a restaurant in Provincetown during the summer of my second year at Brown.

It is an Italian restaurant, located below street level in the center of town and run by a striking woman we were told had once been an opera star. She had hired the three of us to run her kitchen. The cook was a short wiry guy who had been an Italian prisoner of war in an internment camp near New Haven. Apparently, citizens of Italian ancestry, recent immigrants, would visit these former soldiers of *Il Duce*’s empire, bearing care packages. The daughter of one of these families struck up a relationship with one of them—through the bars, so to speak. The war over, this family somehow adopted the guy and he married the daughter, which made him a citizen. They both end up in Provincetown that summer. She’s our salad chef; I wash the dishes. She’s much taller than he is, a handsome girl, and they are very much in love. They go to a lot of movies and he especially likes *Fred Astaire*, and sometimes does a few steps as he flames the lobster *fra diavolo*.

So, I eat well, but the former opera star pays me little and I supplement my income by turning out blueberry pies in the tidy kitchen of the apartment I share with two others. I harvest the blueberries on the dunes outside of town and use something called Flako instant pie crust—ten cents a box to make crusts—and set up shop on the steps of the post office to sell “Aunt Sally’s Homemade Blueberry Pies” to the tourists as they come in to send postcards back home. The stove in my apartment was small so I could only make about four or five pies at a time before my roommates began to complain. I would sell them for about three bucks each—they were freshly made from local produce, remember. That gave me enough extra cash to treat a girl I had met to some beers at the end of the day.

My roommates were the actor Sorrell Booke and the ubiquitous Lenny Green. Sorrell was working at the Provincetown Playhouse, taking on a variety of roles, from an Irish rebel to Napoleon,



PROVINCETOWN PLAYHOUSE c 1960 FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE PILGRIM MONUMENT AND PROVINCETOWN MUSEUM

demonstrating the versatility and aplomb that would later earn him kudos on the New York stage and in television. Lenny was between semesters, as I was, he at Long Island University, and was even then the suave, unruffled persona that monitored not just our bull sessions but the world at large. He was a waiter at the Flagship and with his tips earned much more than the rest of us. One day he introduced me to a classmate from LIU, visiting the Cape, and so I met Nick Pileggi, who was to become a lifelong friend.

Lenny and I ate pretty well from the tables of our different restaurants. But poor Sorrell existed, from all I could figure, from the leavings in the fridge, hot dogs, and Kool-Aid. One afternoon I ran into Tiger Haynes on Commercial Street. He and his trio were appearing at the A-House—his big hit was “Open the Door, Richard.” His wide-faced, happy-go-lucky Caribbean manner countered a lot of the dour news in the morning papers, and this day I invited him back to our place. Sorrell quickly assumed the role of the mannered host. “May I offer you something,” he said to Tiger.

“Yeah, man, break out the Kool-Aid!”

No one blinked nor said anything when Sorrell drew a pitcher of raspberry Kool-Aid from the fridge and poured out three glasses. What Tiger had expected to taste, how high he had expected to cruise, I don’t know, but he drank Sorrell’s potion as if it were something passed down by the gods.

My all-consuming passion that summer was a girl named Lilly, not her real name—she has gone on to important things and I wish to protect her privacy. She was about eighteen and a painting student, small and pretty, dark, and, yes, very intelligent and well read. She challenged me in our discussions of Sartre and Camus and introduced me to Rimbaud and *Une saison en enfer*. We read together in French. Her tidy femininity together with her strong intellect created a

powerful aphrodisiac to my schoolboy adventurism—though she withheld the ultimate act. We wrestled ourselves to exhaustion on the dunes, and one night embraced on Bradford Street as I walked her to her rooming house.

An idling car engine interrupted our kiss. It was a cruiser from the Provincetown police. “If you want to do that,” the cop told us, “get off the street.” As I say, this was 1950.

Lilly had left the atelier that had brought her to Provincetown and had just joined Hans Hofmann’s art school when we met. She supplemented the tips from waiting on table with a part-time job in a bookstore whose name I have forgotten, but it was supposed to be the summer location of the Village’s Eighth Street Bookstore. It was below street level and across Commercial from a restaurant called Pablo’s and just beyond the center of town—about where Spiritus is now located. On mornings filled with the pure light of the Cape, Lilly and I would browse in the bookstore as the staff at Pablo’s would prepare the restaurant for the lunch crowd, windows wide open and the crisp phrases of “Petrouchka” from the restaurant’s hi-fi further illuminating the morning’s ambience.

The alarming situation in Korea continues and Lilly and I become involved in the politics of 1950 through the ambiguous offices of a woman I’ll call Alice. She is a wealthy woman, sumptuous of person and manner, and lives in a sort of private preserve off of Franklin Extension. I have tried to find the place in recent years but recent housing development has blurred its lines in my memory. Alice maintained an open house for all of us impoverished summer waiters and waitresses; beer and wine and good eats seemed to materialize from a magical pantry. There was also a lot of talk about Korea, about Truman’s “intervention” and what was the Communist Party doing about it. The party and its candidates still appeared on

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ballots, and that summer held a protest rally in Boston with Paul Robeson as a principal speaker. Seemingly important attendees at this rally moved importantly through Alice's buffets, and one evening, she invited many of us to attend a rally for the *National Guardian*. She had bought enough tickets to admit us and satisfy our nonpolitical hungers.

The *Guardian*, as some may remember, was a journal founded by the Progressive Party during Henry Wallace's 1948 campaign for the presidency. It was pretty left-wing oriented, some even guessed controlled by the Communist Party, and if any of us even considered the political aims of the publication, it was the food and drink Alice provided that enlisted our fervor.

This so-called rally was held at Wuthering Heights on Shank Painter Road, and so about a dozen of us gathered there one night, Alice with a fistful of tickets. Norman Mailer was the main attraction; he was to speak to us about Korea. I remember the food as being bowls of Portuguese soup and bread. Beer was extra and we were entertained by an old Portuguese fisherman who sang native sea songs, accompanying himself poorly on a guitar. This entertainment went on for a very long time and no sign of Norman Mailer.

The Naked and the Dead was two years behind Mailer, and *Barbary Shore* had come out to a pretty much negative reception. There was talk that Mailer had fallen into the second-novel pit, his mercurial persona had fizzled, but I didn't agree, although *Barbary Shore* did not excite me as *The Naked and the Dead* had. This old fisherman keeps singing these lugubrious songs, and

Lilly sits straighter in her chair.

Then we're told that Mailer will not appear. "We've been unable to talk to him," one of the event's planners tells us. "We've talked to his wife and she says she won't let him come to the phone. Now what kind of a man is that I ask you, letting a woman run his life?"

So we pack up and leave, most of us happy that Adele has ended the evening. But the summer has become melodramatic, whispered strategies in a party's corner, a threat imagined in the shadows of the West End. Lilly and I rinsed ourselves of these anxieties in the brilliant landscape of Highland Light, where we'd go in my jalopy. No fencing there then, just walk across the field and along the lip of the high dune and then down its face to the empty beach at the shoreline. Or we'd join her colleagues from the Hofmann studio for an evening of play and laughter, a party sometimes including Weldon Kees in residence. He entertained us at the piano, perhaps planning his disappearance at the same time.

A small restaurant called To the Queen's Taste occupied the space on Kiley Court that Ciro & Sal's has occupied these many years. I don't remember eating a meal there, probably couldn't afford the whole menu, but a dessert was offered that Lilly and I would split, a wedge of cream cheese with a blob of guava jelly plopped on top. It seemed the height of epicurean delight. The waitress was rumored to have been a mistress of John Dos Passos, and she was an earthy looking redhead and went barefoot everywhere.

I take a job with the *Provincetown Advocate*, as the theater reviewer, which means attending the plays staged by Catharine Huntington and Virginia Thoms in the tiny theater on a wharf on the beach across the street from Adams Pharmacy. I can't remember any payment for these articles—just getting to go to the plays was the reimbursement, applauding my roommate. These two women produced an astounding list of plays on that postage stamp of a stage, including one of Shakespeare's mega-cast comedies that I wrote negatively of, much to Huntington's displeasure. She was a petite woman who could draw herself up large—you didn't want to cross her.

The sets were designed and painted on the wharf outside the theater by Bill Roberts, whose wife, Janet, worked for Audrey Wood, Tennessee Williams's agent. *A Streetcar Named Desire* had opened in 1947 and Provincetown still twittered with the gossip of Williams and Brando cavorting in its backstreets, true or not. Several years later, Janet Roberts's sister is to become my first wife.

The war in Korea wears on, becomes more complicated and threatening—atomic powers at loggerheads for the first time and it is scary. One evening, Sorrell performing and Lenny serving at the Flagship, Lilly no longer defends her virginity, and the transfer is done so naturally and with no comment from Lilly, always a passionate verbalizer, so I am almost dumbfounded as to how it happened. Our summer's apprenticeship had come to an end—we have become serious as has the world.

HILARY MASTERS's new novel, *Post*, will be published this fall. He is married to the mystery writer Kathleen George and they live in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

How the Indians Buried Their Dead: Stories

By Hilary Masters

Southern Methodist University Press, 2009

A BOOK REVIEW BY DENNIS MINSKY

MARRIED PEOPLE may be divided into two kinds: those who have contemplated or acted upon adultery and those who have not. Don't tell me which group you belong to, I won't believe you. But people in either group will enter into a relationship with the author, Hilary Masters, in his latest collection of stories.

In six of these fourteen stories, infidelity is at issue, from the merest shade of a thought to an affair of many years. In "The Moving Finger" the narrator, between flights in O'Hare airport, "yields to an impulse" and makes a call to an old flame—a call he had thought about making numerous times before. When she turns out to be nothing short of a nutcase, and pronounces that he is trying to "cop a feel by way of Ma Bell," he replies, "Oh, please, please, Cindy, it's not that. That's not the reason I called, believe me." He hears his voice, and knows she is sincere. Are we entirely convinced? Is he? Later, en route in the air, "he figures he may have been trying to find some fulcrum in Chicago on which to balance his travels."

"The Italian Grammar" is a fuller account with some of the same elements—infidelity and deception, trust and self-knowledge. The narrator states early in the story that "dreams yet rummage my sleep" and recounts a faint relationship that he began with a woman he had idolized in the "Eisenhower era," meeting at the Metropolitan Museum from time to time, nothing more: "So we began to meet. I never told Eunice of these meetings. They went on for a year, but she would have gotten the wrong idea. Nothing happened, I mean. On the other hand, what was the right idea?" There seems little doubt what it was: "It was all in my head, but my disloyalty was especially evident after a fumbling gesture on that first afternoon . . . 'Oh, Billy.' She laughed and gently held me off. 'Not now.' I never resolved the ambiguity of those words, and I became stuck in them as if in amber." So he followed her through the museum on these occasional meetings, "neither rejected nor favored," until she leaves the country for good. Years later, he learns that he played a part, an anonymous part, in the chance-driven direction of her life. It is a profound lesson, and perhaps not his alone. In its aftermath his good wife turns to and kisses him: "When she pulls back, her eyes glisten. The low illumination of the place is reflected and somehow charged by her tears, in which I have just seen my mean ambition and small desires."

The writer in "The Plagiarist" is confronted by his wife about "That little waitress you've been shacking up with in the afternoon. I read that story you just sent in, another of your piquant interludes. Do you think I can't understand where you get your ideas?" He protests: "As for the story . . . you must know by now that it is all invented. A fantasy." What is the truth? Here is a man to whom women flocked "as penitents," and "pressed themselves into these square hands." But in the versions of this story, fact and fiction hang in the balance until ultimately he is reduced to tears and becomes "an embarrassment in the afternoon."

In the knockout, ambitious "Chekhov's Gun," there are twin narratives involving infidelity, although one is what might be called successful and certainly is actualized, while the other, like the man on the phone in the airport, is barely on the brink of being. This juxtaposition—and the wildly opposite outcomes—create a dramatic force and trajectory to the story. In the first narrative, the older, understated diplomat holds a powerful sway over the beautiful musician, belying his "nebbish bureaucrat" image and conducting events across continents and time zones masterfully and to a seemingly confident conclusion. The poor fellow in the second narrative, the town clerk in a small upstate New York town, certainly much older than the high school girl who becomes his intern at town hall, is what could only be called a pillar, with a host of ancestors in the local cemetery, grown children, "a careful and honorable man . . . happy with the life he and his wife followed, which seemed governed by an old manual for behavior they may have come upon in the attic of the farmhouse that had been her family's." His response at their first meeting: "Still a child, Schoonmaker thought and looked away." But "warning flags had gone up" for a good man who was trying to remain so: "The urge to reach out and pat one of the pretty knees . . . was mixed with the urge to use his importance to put her on the right track." They "became a team," even as the inevitable small-town gossip ensues: "Schoonmaker convinced himself he was doing no wrong—he hadn't put a hand on the girl—but at the same time he enjoyed the flattery of these intimations." In fiction, as in life, there are delicate balances to maintain; the expected and brilliant conclusion definitely elicited a gasp from this reader.

In the unexpectedly funny "Mourning After," a wife's eyes "become pieces of shale that catch me



in their gleam" over an affair nine years back. The stale sadness of the surviving marriage leavens this story. In the ironically titled "Double Wedding Ring," a marriage is apparently surviving a long ongoing "routine" affair that has "outlasted two hotels" and has seen one of the participant's hair turn white. Still, there is a duality: "guiltless pleasures" also constitute "the deception of the afternoon." And this is the essence of infidelity that makes it such rich ground for fiction, and apparently a real learning experience in actual life: someone contemplating or conducting an affair is entering into existential territory; the components of his or her life must be fully investigated, tested, juxtaposed, and plumbed. In the "fulcrum" that was sought in the airport of "The Moving Finger," and the "ambiguity" that persists in the museum of "The Italian Grammar," we find characters attempting to define themselves and their roles in dual relationships, who must get to the root of themselves, their lives, their values and life goals, and deal with inchoate but persistent signals of despair.

In many of these stories, adult children deal with the memories of parents and grandparents. They range from the somewhat alienated son and his ex-con/gourmet chef father in "Meatloaf" to the dutiful daughter and her upstanding mother in "The Genuine Article." In this aspect of lives, too, characters "become different selves." Relating to parents and grandparents is akin to dealing with lovers and partners—in this sense we fashion different selves for each situation.

Suffused within these stories is a richness of experience that indicates a worldly writer, a well-traveled man (airports appear in more than one story), knowledgeable of fine art and music, and, most of all, food. From page 1 the reader learns the secret ingredient for a meatloaf "no one objects to paying twenty-five bucks for," the recipe for Tournedos Rossini, and the art of beating a resilient creamy meringue. Later stories include

"cinnamon buns and gooseberry jam for the croissants" in Paris, "reindeer steaks and buf-falo grass-flavored vodka" in Helsinki, and "tuna steaks quickly seared in sesame oil and ice cold Muscadet" in Laguna Beach. The "crisp chalkiness" of the "Tocai wine from Friuli" is appreciated in the lounge of the Pittsburgh air terminal, as is the "charred wood flavor" of the whiskey in Galway. In "Solitaire," the offer of "tenderloin

black and blue and a bottle of '05 Bordeaux" got my attention. Hilary Masters, I should say, seems very good company.

Masters is a writer of refinement and delicacy, in a harsh and blatant time. In matters sexual, as in others, there is an avoidance of the graphic, a preference for the subtle, the shaded, the oblique but nonetheless dead-on description. It is absolutely refreshing.

My favorite sentence: "The crucifix lies in the valley of her brown breasts like the wreck of a small plane."

DENNIS MINSKY, a resident of Provincetown since 1968, is a writer and a naturalist. He has worked with Cape Cod National Seashore and the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, and serves on four committees that promote conservation on the Outer Cape.

In Rooms of Memory: Essays

By Hilary Masters

University of Nebraska Press, 2009

A BOOK REVIEW BY DEBORAH MINSKY

A READER MIGHT AT FIRST ENVY Hilary Masters for the range of his life, the breadth of his travels, but subtle regret and self-recrimination course under the surface of his narrative thus tempering such a response. To some extent, he *has* led a charmed life, for he is a learned, well-loved, and well-traveled man. However, close examination reveals his joys have come after considerable challenge and difficulty going all the way back to his childhood. By his first birthday, Masters was essentially abandoned by his parents and sent to live with his maternal grandparents until he was old enough for boarding school. Call it what you may, this desertion colors his writing, fiction or nonfiction, and frames a lifelong search for a grounded sense of self. Take "Going to Cuba." This opening essay offers a view of a young, adventuresome man nonetheless preoccupied by his search:

By this summer of 1951, I am borrowing more than books from my father's library. . . . His history has also become a study for me, a curiosa [sic] to browse. He has just died the year before, and this final abandonment has led me to trace his and my mother's path around New York, to follow the outline of their lives, lived without me, before it becomes grown over in memory.

Masters leads his readers quite suddenly into a difficult reality; the piece is not just about a youthful fling with a mysterious woman; it is suffused with a different kind of longing. Mercifully, he omits all traces of self-pity. We are not embarrassed by his revelations, just appreciative of his impulse to share personal insight.

Masters shows himself to be a great reader, a scholar of literature. If his chronology is accurate, he first read *Robinson Crusoe* when he was just seven. One might be prompted to say, "Impossible!" but it is best to accept this tender age as fact and allow the charm of his musings about the book to hold sway over any skepticism about actual age. In "Making It Up," he credits Defoe's classic with turning him into a writer. Note how vital the book is to him; note how it connects to his lifelong search for self.

I had already pictured myself as an orphan, set adrift . . . from my parents. Kansas City was not quite a desert island, but something told me it wasn't where I should be. And here, in *Robinson Crusoe*, I came upon the plans and methods to reconstruct my reality, to overcome my sense of isolation. . . . The shipwrecked sailor showed me how to bring together scraps of happenstance—how the debris of the past and the present can be salvaged to make up a different identity, a new worth in the work of its making.

You sympathize with this young reader, even as you applaud his resourcefulness and determination to create his own world.

Masters's prose is uncomplicated yet elegant; here is a writer who knows and loves language and still remains true to his first responsibility: to tell a story well and true, without intimidation or posturing. His narration is a bit disjointed; within any given essay he tends to jump from time immediate to somewhere back in the past or into a future. He is generous with personal detail and brings his reader easily into his own frame of reference. He shares when other less honest or open souls might think twice. For this reader he is at his most revealing in "Disorderly Conduct," an ironic, albeit aptly named, piece:

Perhaps Officers Germain and Quinn had suspected in my movement down Main Street a whole array of crimes that I had got away with up until then. Disorderly conducts. . . . In the basement of Mr. Clemence's handsome building, I face the wall and multiple accusations. I have deserted my children, not physically so much as spiritually and emotionally, committing the same desertion that I am trying to write about in *Last Stands: Notes from Memory*. . . . My purpose had been to make myself into a father worthy of their respect and love. In the meantime, their wounds have been deep. More misconduct. I have lied to my wife. I have cheated on her. . . .

Aren't we touching on private ground here?



Should this reader enter this particular door?

Charged with responding to this new volume of personal essays, I am faced with a question: Am I reading *In Rooms of Memory* to expand my literary sense of the author, or to heighten my understanding of the man himself? (Perhaps friends should not review the work of friends.)

Even while traveling in Europe, whether revisiting Montaigne's hometown or his own favorite haunts along the French countryside, Masters can't seem to escape the crosscurrents of longing to recover a childhood never actually lived and remorse for aspects of his adult life he feels virtually doomed to repeat over and over again. In less skillful hands, with less graceful prose, his essays might have been swamped by sensationalism or the dread "TMI" of today's parlance. But do not fear, "gentle reader." When you take this slim, vibrant volume from its shelf and settle down to explore Hilary Masters's world, you will expose yourself to great joy, wisdom, and humor, despite (or is it because of?) the pervasive, nostalgic "disease" that, sadly, seems to bind him forever. You will have put yourselves into the hands (or mind) of a master storyteller with the courage to share all, honestly.

DEBORAH MINSKY is a freelance writer who lives year-round in Provincetown. She taught English and creative writing for over twenty years; currently, she is executive director and curator of the Highland House Museum in North Truro.

A Ticket to the Circus: A Memoir

By Norris Church Mailer

Random House, 2010

A BOOK REVIEW BY LENORE HART

SOMEWHERE, IN AN ALTERNATE universe, the *other* Norris Church Mailer is a by-god lion tamer. That's the best explanation that occurs to me after reading *A Ticket to the Circus*, her memoir, which chronicles, with both the forgiveness of true love and the stark honesty of rueful hindsight, thirty-three years spent married to Norman Mailer.

A couple of early reviewers complained that the work doesn't give enough literary insight into Mailer's works. Those reviewers miss the point. This book isn't the definitive Mailer biography and literary critique—it's *her* story, one she's waited all her life to tell. Though in the process we do see Mailer vividly, illuminated under various lights—from cuddly, low-watt romantic pinks to stark, unflattering fluorescents. But when on rare occasions he's damned within these pages it is by his own hand, words, or deeds. Norris Mailer is unfailingly gracious, patient, and fair, even as she gets it—well, almost all of it—right out in the open. Like any wise Southern woman she knows when to play her hand, and when it is more polite to simply hold 'em. For, as she notes in the opening, there are already plenty of rude people in the world.

The real job of *Circus* is to show us just what sort of woman could not only stay in for the long haul, but even partly domesticate a larger-than-life literary beast. The answer seems to be: one who can stand up to both overwhelming love and cruel treatment, and remain herself. Who can be patient through a lengthy, messy housebreaking project. One who, when needed, can dish out raw red meat and—finally—a few long-overdue ultimatums.

The author begins with her early childhood, during which she showed at least once a rather Mailer-like proclivity for grabbing the spotlight with both hands—becoming Little Miss Little Rock at age three, then refusing to give up her spot on the stage. Her voice is unpretentious and amusing, self-deprecating and sure of itself, reminiscent of the first-person fictional narrator in her two novels, *Windchill Summer* and *Cheap Diamonds*.

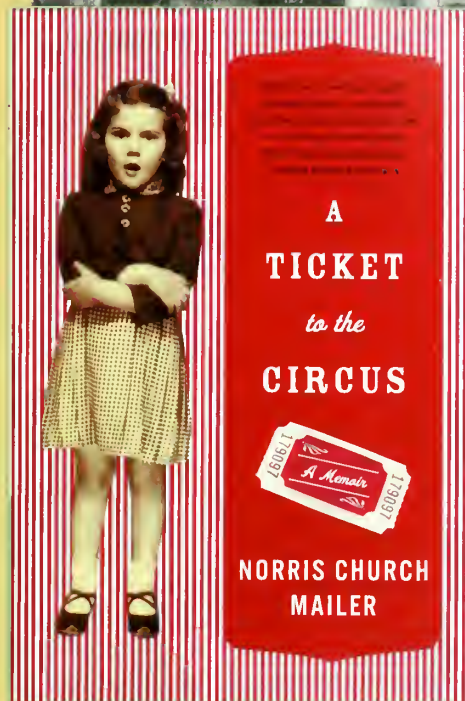
Dare she engage in name-dropping? Well, how

would *you* chronicle a life spent at various times hanging around with celebrities, such as Muhammad Ali, Jackie Onassis, Gore Vidal, the Ramones, Bill Clinton, Pat Lawford, James Jones, Oscar de la Renta, Bob Dylan, Ali MacGraw, Joni Mitchell, Sergio Leone, and Arthur Schlesinger, to list merely a few—by leaving out all the names? The trip to Manila for the Ali-Frazier fight is particularly entertaining, as well as surreal. Her first boxing match, and the crowds of photographers aimed the cameras at her and Norman as often as at the ring, because the new couple was already something of a scandal back in the States. She and Mailer visited Ali in his suite before the bout. There Norris struggled to stay awake after the long flight as Ali pontificated in a lengthy, vaguely spiritual monologue, and all the while an old Ronald Reagan film unreeled in the background. Meanwhile Norman was Norman, flirting with Imelda Marcos.

Her narrative is often most engaging when she's talking about herself rather than her husband. Detailing the early years, the Irish and Cherokee background she recalls from family oral history, and the life she led as a hippie college student, then unhappy wife of a Vietnam vet, and finally as a young, divorced single mother and art teacher, who, for a while, was one of Bill Clinton's many girlfriends.



THE FAMILY IN MAINE, 1980 PHOTO BY MARCO COLODRO



At least until she regretfully realized that, physical attraction aside, she didn't have the deep intellectual connection, the true rapport with him a certain young Hillary Rodham enjoyed. Her first encounter with Mailer was in 1975, at a party in Russellville, Arkansas, when he was passing through on a book tour for *Marilyn*. The tall, beautiful, red-haired hometown girl met the big-city exotic—the compact, severe-weather event that was Norman Mailer. And soon small-town Arkansas was an ancient evening in history.

The key to understanding Norris Church Mailer is probably the times. She's part of that in-between generation of women, the one that protested the war and still cooked dinner every night; that went out and got a job, by god, and still was expected—if not required—to take on all the childcare and laundry and other domestic chores. At this time, the 1970s, any woman who presumed to reach for something bigger and bolder would pretty much have to make it all up as she went along. To choreograph her own act, even if it was in part still hitched to the star of some man. Even if it meant, in the end, taking on a new name, chosen by *him* (for she was born Barbara Jean Davis, not Norris Church). And even joining a long chorus line of significant others made up of one current wife, one mistress who was slowly phasing out, one primary girlfriend, a whole secondary cast of part-time honeys, seven children (so far), and three already-ex-wives. To this dramatic mix, which Norris expertly juggled, she added one young son of her own. Another, courtesy of the ever-prolific Mailer, was soon on the way. Throughout all this, a more or less daily three-ring event, which would have exhausted the likes of Helpful Heloise and Gloria Steinem combined, she admits, "No matter the circumstances of our passions and rages, our boredoms, angers and betrayals large and small, sex was the cord that bound us together."

Still, pulling it off was a triumph made up of equal parts multitasking, hard labor, and dogged diplomacy. And maybe it's the case, as Norris suggests, that he "had a great time playing Henry



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Higgins to my Eliza Doolittle." But that really does not explain her own staying power, her (sometimes perhaps too gracious) tolerance of the slights and cruelties that punctuated his also-apparent charm and sex appeal. Though there is not anything in the memoir that can truly be labeled a complaint, much less whining, how it must have hurt sometimes! The

complacent demands for both strength and submission, even when she too was sick or in pain (she was diagnosed with cancer at age fifty-one). So much complacent presumption! That anything he wanted trumped her desires or needs—oh, and by the way, "Tears were repugnant to him." Well, it was a different era, which extended well past its sell-by date into this one by extraordinary circumstances, and held interesting people who must've made it all seem mostly worth it.

And, yet! One day, almost a decade into the marriage, looking over the household accounts—for by then Norris Church Mailer had made Norman's chaotic life run as smoothly as Mussolini's trains—she found strange charges on a credit card bill. When she faced her husband with them he quickly, almost gratefully, spewed the nauseating details: "It was like he was vomiting up a bad meal and had to get it all out." It seemed he had at some point rededicated himself to having girlfriends—many, many girlfriends—on the side. Why had he stayed on with her, she wondered, since his usual modus operandi was to dump his wives after a few years, and then resume the wild life of an urban Casanova, at least until the next marriage? Norris is blunt about her final take on this: "I ran his life like a tidy ship—I took care of the kids, the book-keeping and bill paying, and got the insurance we needed. I shopped and cooked and saw that he always had clean clothes in his closet and a car full of gas." In other words, she was the dream wife every writer, male and female, still secretly longs for.

Yet she was also much more. A talented painter. An actress. A New York fashion model who—had she not automatically put herself at Mailer's beck and call—might have seen the prefix "super" added to that last job title. But it wasn't until they'd been married well over two decades that she pulled out a novel she'd begun long before meeting Norman, and revised it, while fending off his insistent offers to "fix" it. This manuscript being the same one he'd dismissed almost twenty-five years earlier with the offhand insult, "It's not as bad as I thought it would be."

Midway through this memoir even the biggest Norman Mailer fan will be forced to wonder at times, "But—but *why*? Why stay with him?" For example, when she finally nearly gave out, ten years ago, while taking painful and horrendous



NORRIS POSING FOR MILTON GREENE
MILTON H. GREENE © 2010 JOSHUA GREENE, WWW.LEGENDLICENSING.COM

treatments for that aforementioned rare cancer, Mailer's compassionate response was to move down the hall and leave her to her own devices. So much for payback. But then, why does anyone stay with anyone for decades through both the good and the most gruesome of times? Like her former romantic rival, now known as Hillary Rodham Clinton; like any woman (or man) who marries a successful, brilliant, narcissistic artist or actor or writer or politician or brain surgeon. Genius is not known for being inherently kind.

And how many former Little Miss Little Rocks, once all but entombed in Rubeville—despite the occasional anger, humiliation, and creative frustration—would in the end choose to exit the spotlight of one of the greatest shows on earth, and go back? Besides, once you've really gotten fed up, you don't get mad to make your point, Norris suggests; you get even. Once, after she'd spent an entire day cleaning out his pigsty of a New York apartment, Mailer came home and savagely rebuked her for not hanging up one freshly dry-cleaned suit. Oh, yeah? Well, fine. She slugged him in the jaw.

In the end, the reader will close this book on the biggest of spectacles and wish Norris Church Mailer even more fulfillment, success, and joy—in a life that now will be inarguably of her own making. Never again to be relegated to a side tent, but always, now, the main event. Meanwhile, this memoir will more than serve as a final domestic love note from Norris to Norman. For, as she says in its Epilogue, "I've had so much more than most. I wouldn't trade with anybody in the world. And who knows what Norman is doing on the other side?" (The mind boggles to think of it.) Then, ending on a final note of exquisite grace, she says, "I'm anxious to catch up with him and find out."

LENORE HART is the author of over half a dozen novels, including Becky: The Life and Loves of Becky Thatcher and Waterwoman (a Barnes & Noble Discover Award book). She teaches in the MA/MFA Writing Program at Wilkes University in Pennsylvania, and the Norman Mailer Writers Colony in Provincetown. She lives on the Eastern Shore of Virginia with her husband, novelist David Poyer, and their daughter, Naia. Her forthcoming novel, The Raven's Bride (also about a talented woman living in the shadow of a famous writer husband), will be published by St. Martin's Press in January 2011.

Stealing Fatima

By Frank X. Gaspar

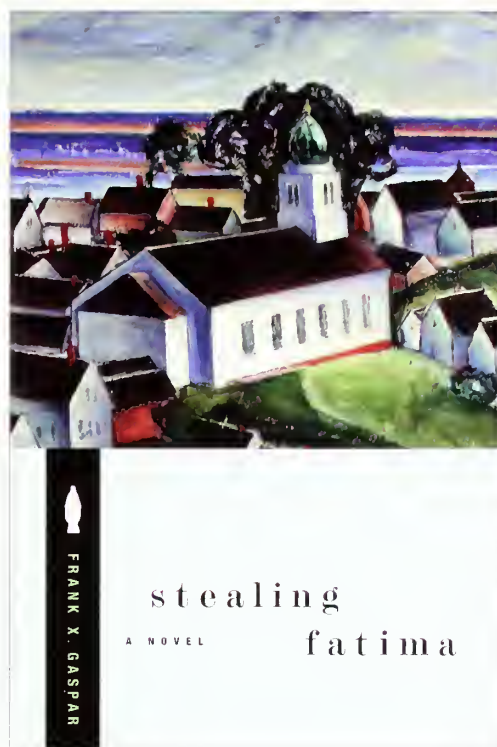
Counterpoint Press, 2009

A BOOK REVIEW BY KATHERINE VAZ

FRANK X. GASPAR, an award-winning poet (his most recent volume is the radiant, moonlight-drenched *Night of a Thousand Blossoms*) and novelist (*Leaving Pico*), is a native son of Provincetown, and his latest novel, *Stealing Fatima*, is a wrenchingly grace-filled Valentine to a vanishing world, elegiac and aching but also clear-eyed in its portraits. It's a book based upon real love, in other words: Its gaze is held steady at people as they truly are, with their moribund dreams and unfailing hopes, and at a place for what it is.

The story moves with the verve of a high-literary mystery novel, with secrets and betrayals and fast-clip action, while the prose's heart anchors it in lyrical richness and exquisite detailing: What rings through is a near-heartbreaking affection for the Portuguese-American enclave that once upon a time was so strong that Provincetown was referred to as the "Tenth Island." (There are nine major islands in the Azores.) It is significant that the setting is obviously Provincetown, but the town's name never appears, as if its Portuguese/Azorean heyday is so long in the grave that it's scarcely an echo of the Luso community that the Townies remember. Many of the "People from Away" who reside there, though, fit right in now. Mariah, who crashed into town on a Piper plane, lives with her partner, Winslow, and has pushed out the vindictive old biddy, Mrs. Horta, who used to rule the roost at the Our Lady of Fatima rectory. Mariah's crash is both divine-seeming and dangerous; many characters are like angels prone to falling, landing with their wings on fire. And that Mariah insists upon belonging to a church where her homosexuality might be problematic further cements a new order of things.

Owning the center of Gaspar's novel is Father Manuel Furtado, whose solitary nights involve gin and pills (he rationalizes that this treats a Vietnam wartime injury, his own plane mishap), as he writes literally feverishly—confessionally—in ledgers. The story's catalyst is embodied in Sarafino Pomba (suggesting a seraph, and *pomba* means "dove" or "paraclete"), one of Father Furtado's long-lost friends, returning as he's dying of AIDS and fleeing an arrest warrant thanks to a botched liquor store heist with addled friends. This bears a remarkable resemblance to a defining incident in their boyhood, when their last night before shipping out separately for Vietnam involved getting sky-high on Benzedrine and



kidnapping the magnificent statue of Our Lady of Fatima from the church. ("Furtado" is a common Portuguese surname, but *furtar* is also a verb meaning "to steal, nab, pilfer.")

Though this drug-fuelled act smacks of being a prank, it also represented Manny striking out at his fisherman father, a man of such dimensions that he's called Father by the community. (No accident, Manny's sister Alzaida later points out, that Manny chose the career path of a Father.) That Manny hasn't completely formulated his motives when he steals the statue funded by his father and other parishioners gives impetus to an inquiry into the consequences and far-reaching implications of every action, hidden or not, fully realized or knee-jerk. The statue itself displays in Her face "a compassion that was so heightened that such an expression would never be found in life. . . . a smile, yes, but with such sadness behind it." A lovely riff on the Portuguese sensibility of *saudade*, sweet mournfulness, gentle sorrow toward what is simultaneously absent and present.

The night in question goes awry when they drag the statue out to the woods to bury it but run into a soused Old Man Coelho in the cemetery. Sarafino, clowning around, curses him. Coelho is found collapsed in a dead heap—surely from chronic drunkenness and a failing heart?—by morning. Sarafino and Manny ship out and lose track of one another for years.

Gaspar has a poet's sensibility but also a master storyteller's deftness. The plot courses along with swift, implacable force; there are twists and turns so riveting that a full summation would ruin what a reader will be astonished to discover on his or her own. The story brims with secrets that, spilling over, cause tidal waves. Everyone turns out to be inextricably bound to each other. Alzaida and her husband, Tommy, a fisherman still taking out his deceased father-in-law's boat, have their marital troubles laid bare; Mariah and Winslow have a hand in the ongoing fate of the statue. The

ironically named Father John Sweet, pompous and with an ambitious eye trained upon garnering his own seaside parish, plays a fine villain investigating Father Manny's addictions. Manny steadfastly lies that his alcohol and drug abuse, an open secret from his past, no longer haunts him.

Stealing Fatima offers the daring premise that in this era of flippant apologies, unexamined acts, or escape as the all-purpose American solution to problems, there's also a physical, spiritual, and moral plane where true atonement, inescapable facing of actions, must be played out. Even if the understanding or reckoning is years or a lifetime in the making. If it is impossible to hide secrets—or one's self—from an omnipresent God, then it is also folly to hope that one's covert shame or sins fade away unnoticed. Sooner or later all will be revealed, all barriers torn down, all cowering will rot away the concealing walls, much as the Paraclete drove the Apostles out of their hiding after the Crucifixion. An accident involving Tommy sets off a series of explosive revelations. Father Manny descends into a personal hell, a spinning out of control, that guarantees his exposure. The parish and Our Lady of Fatima Church, much like the unnamed town itself, undergo a shocking transformation at the novel's end, with Father Manny Furtado trapped bodily and spiritually within it. The book rises to a crescendo with an act of reclamation that shimmers, leading to a coda as ethereally beautiful as one can hope to read and that reminds us of literature's own moving, redemptive powers.

Every page holds gems of description, from the (archaic) typewriter, "thick as some primitive engine block," to phrases such as "some scaffold within him collapsed." Piles of clothing are "days-deep." Those of us whose childhoods recall Luso-American festivals will delight in revisiting *suspiros* and *malassadas* sold in booths at festivals, will laugh at Alzaida's chiding about her father's "puffed-up Portagee" bombast (though the book, as with any story of an immigrant culture, can be enjoyed by anyone). The texture of the writing is deep, a work of art: When Tom sets out to repair the rectory, clear the squirrels' nests, fix the rafters, sweep the place out of its stupor, it recalls Ursula the matriarch's adamant upkeep of her household in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as crucial to survival. (And while Tom is "fixing things," he walks past where the ominous Father Sweet, referred to as the "Fixer," is making Father Manny squirm.) One chapter opens with a repeated refrain of "He did not believe. . ." that creates a type of Reverse Credo. The ledgers that Father Manny uses were left behind by his predecessor, Father Teófilo Braga, who bears the name of a nineteenth-century Azorean writer whose dreams of justice were realized when he became President of the Provisional Government in Portugal after the collapse of the monarchy. There are shades of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Babylon Revisited" in Father Manny's desire to dare a single drink so the idea of alcohol doesn't grow too large.

The novel isn't afraid to address the role of shame in the human condition, much as we try to argue that it's better left to our grandparents or parents. It can be interpreted that the price of

failing to bridge the gap between who we truly are and the face we present to the world is a ravaging, ashamed emptiness, a theme that arises repeatedly. Even at a moment of relative ease, Father Manny jars us by reporting that he "... felt liked and admired, but the feeling did not go into him very deeply." Sarafino's own emptiness is often described, and his room is referred to as an "empty nest." In order to close that gap between the obvious and the hidden, we're asked to question our notions of what constitutes criminality, versus what might be a challenging, creative response. An act that is criminal by definition caps the plot, but it is healing and necessary. It happens to require concealment; life is complex enough to ask us to distinguish what should be announced from what needs honorable subterfuge.

Stealing Fatima seems to embrace the truths contained within Simone Weil's essay on "Affliction," that spiritual oppression must, sooner or later, take the form of social alienation and then—crucially—physical ailment. The final pages contain the remarkable assertion (referring to priests on retreat to cure despair, loss of faith, or addiction) that "The brothers of Saint Matthew of the Mount saw such despair not as a sin but as a kind of suffering, and the order recognized such suffering as a holy state and therefore redemptive." It's wonderfully audacious to implore readers to note and embrace and forgive suffering, since we live in a climate of shrugging off or despising our own as well as the world's. The novel's considerable achievement is that we read the pages eager to find out what happens next, while what we are mining are the human foibles that are, finally, inseparable from grace, inseparable from the redemption of what we have been, what we are now, what we will always be.

KATHERINE VAZ, a former Briggs-Copeland Fellow in Fiction at Harvard and a Fellow of the Radcliffe Institute, is the author of the novels *Saudade* and *Mariana* (published in six languages and selected by the Library of Congress as one of the Top Thirty International Books of 1998). Her collection *Fado & Other Stories* won the 1997 Drue Heinz Literature Prize, and *Our Lady of the Artichokes* received the 2007 Prairie Schooner Book Prize. She was a member of the six-person Presidential Delegation sent to the World's Fair/Expo 98 in Lisbon and was a 2002 Portuguese-American Woman of the Year.

All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems

By Charles Bernstein

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010

▲ BOOK REVIEW BY MARY MAXWELL

THAT CHARLES BERNSTEIN'S *All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems* has been brought out by a publisher at the epicenter of "traditional verse culture" is bound to raise the eyebrows of those at both ends of the contemporary poetry spectrum: How in the world did this book get published? Could it simply be another piece of recycled flotsam carried along by the rising flood of unnecessary *New and Selected Poems*? Certainly such literary goods are increasingly being marketed as a way to make a mid-career poet's tepid or dissipating output appear more substantial than it's really been.

Such a cynical explanation, however, doesn't correspond to the appearance of *All the Whiskey in Heaven*. For whatever else might be noted about him (the self-promoting consequences of his efforts, for example), Bernstein's extensive and energetic activities on poetry's behalf could hardly be described as halfhearted. At the forefront of electronic media for well over a decade, the poet has been in a unique position to utilize and benefit from the newer technologies; a generous—if not exhaustive—selection of his own work in performance can be found at the PennSound Web site. Whether online and or on the conventional page, Bernstein (now the author of twenty-five or so published volumes of poetry) seems to be picking up, rather than losing, steam.

One function traditionally assigned the *Selected Poems* has been to keep important work available to a serious readership, especially when a poet's early books are out of print or hard to find. Since the era of BookFinder (as well as readily Web-accessible reprints and readings such as those linked at PennSound) this last impetus has lost much of its exigency. It's true that many of Bernstein's earliest volumes came out under somewhat obscure (Tuumba, Pod, Aweda, Zasterle) imprints; in 2000, on the other hand, Bernstein published a fairly complete offering of this work in Sun & Moon's *Republics of Reality 1975–1995*. (The book's cover may not have included the words "selected" or "collected," but that's the kind of gathering it was nonetheless.)

So what exactly, just ten years later, is "America's most ardent literary provocateur" (in the words of Paul Auster) doing at Farrar, Straus and Giroux with another book of "selected poems," whose title sounds like the latest offering from August Kleinzahler? In a recent interview Bernstein himself has observed that "official verse culture needs to incorporate and tokenize a critical amount of peripheral material, which it then hopes (often vainly) to anaesthetize by embedding within its set of norms." At first glance it would appear that this indeed describes what has taken place with Bernstein's most recent publication.

His poetry, however, has not been effectively

de-thorned. Despite my reservations about the essential incongruity of the enterprise, *All the Whiskey in Heaven* comprises a stimulating, unsettling, and ultimately rewarding book. Bernstein's oeuvre has benefited from the volume's rigorous (thinking here of Sappho's few roses) pruning. This is not to suggest that a lot of deadwood has been cut out or that the rest of his output is composed of inferior blooms; on the contrary, there are many things I would have liked to have seen included: much more work from *The Absent Father in Dumbo*, for example, or most especially a lyric or two from Bernstein's libretto for the opera *Shadowtime*, published by Green Integer in 2005. But the relative sparseness of the volume not only allows for new appreciation of individual poems or excerpts from longer works, it makes the convincing case for a certain quasi-narrative trajectory of his stylistically diverse output so far—which is, of course, what any authentic *Selected* must try to do.

Though the table of contents suggests that the material has been organized chronologically, there's considerable variation as to whether individual poems are dated by their composition or by their publication. As just one example, when the poems from *Residual Rubbernecking* were published by Sun & Moon in 2000, they were there identified as being written in 1995. Here they follow work from the omnibus *My Way*, published in 1999. Not that this is in itself terribly important, but such editorial inconsistency makes evident that the selections have been given a shape slightly ajar from strict chronology. The book's specific arc is partly the contribution of Marjorie Perloff, whom Bernstein thanks by name in his acknowledgements "for her suggestions on the selection and support for this project." As much as I appreciate Perloff's advocacy of (and involvement with) Bernstein's career, I wonder about the appropriateness of including a blurb from her on the volume's back cover. There's a certain closed self-reflexivity in her presence both in and on the book. I nonetheless wholeheartedly agree with her concise articulation quoted there that Bernstein "displays a formal range, performative urgency, and verbal dexterity unmatched by other poets of his generation."

Once it could have been argued that as a result of Bernstein's position as an important proponent of Language poetry, a comprehensive review of his oeuvre required dealing with the whole problematic of acoustical (and even quasi-dramatic) recital. The poet's own thoughts on such issues have been treated in depth in his contributions to the manifesto-journal *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* or in his introduction to the 1998 collection of essays *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*. But with his latest book's conventional publication, it's time to evaluate Bernstein's lexical explorations and experimentations as they play upon the silent page. For though Bernstein the performer is often very funny, it would be a great disservice to his "performative poetics" to treat it merely as an "outside" or countercultural version of the reading-friendly, stand-up lyricism produced by more mainstream practitioners. While his poems may well remain texts to be performed (Bernstein himself has used the expression "thought opera" to describe his

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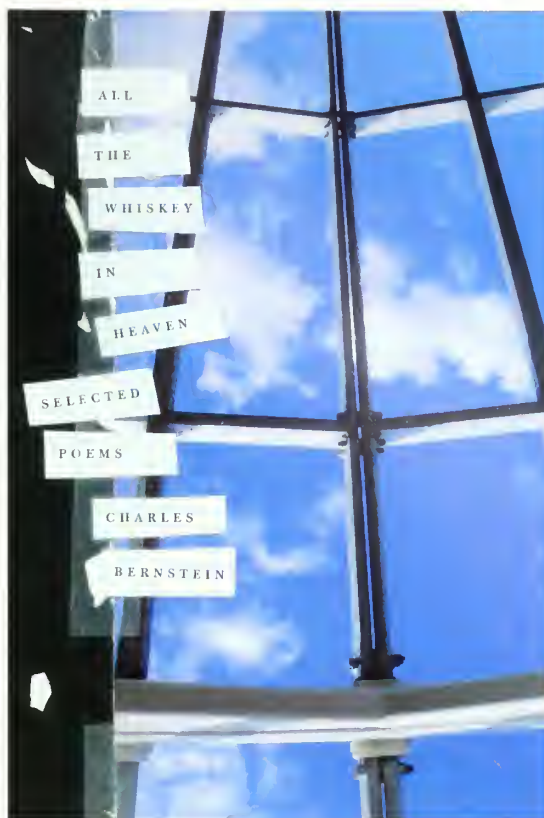
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ambitions), these *Selected Poems* now need to be read and judged as printed score.

Though the theoretical approaches associated with Language poetry have in practice become almost completely mainstream, there can still be detected in some quarters the remnant suspicion that the “nonlinear” prosody proposed by Bernstein and his circle has always been a justification for the evasion of metrical rigor. The idea of a “nonverse indeterminacy” does sound suspiciously like a hoax. Unquestionably, poems such as “The Italian Border of the Alps” look like prose and sound like nonsense. In addition, Bernstein’s sentences (in contrast, say, to those of the Surrealists) don’t retain any feel of traditional verse movement. In fact, even when his works are set in lines, enjambments are usually weak or nonexistent; even when an end of line is marked by punctuation, the effect remains that of unrequited wraparound “hankering after frozen (prose) ambience / (ambivalence).” In a manner derived from Charles Olson, Bernstein’s poetics use space, rather than punctuation or syntax, as a structural element or indicator of pulse (if not, strictly speaking, regular rhythm). Passage of time—what in performance would be a pause—is suggested by lack of typography; this effect is most emphatic in the wait-for-the-laugh vacancy made by “This Poem Intentionally Left Blank.”

Bernstein thus often works with mass-media language apparently culled from business publications, advertising, and *TV Guide* listings, composing what might be called “apparently found poetry.” In this Dada-inspired yet postmodernist schema, the traditional idea of “author” (or even “poetry”) becomes an exceedingly unstable concept. *All the Whiskey in Heaven*’s first poem, “Asylum,” serves as introduction to this appropriative method, as well as to recurring themes. (Significantly, the poem was not included in *Republics of Reality*.) A seventeen-page verbal collage formed from the sociologist’s studies of institutional residents, “Asylum” rearranges Erving Goffman’s *Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Fragments from Goffman employing social-science rhetoric present a pseudo-objective perspective on the individual’s relation to the closed society in which he lives. Context is all, and remains all: When Bernstein changes Goffman’s “frame” from scholarly discourse to the register of poetry, text is transformed. The material’s apparent “subject” (the social situation of mental patients) becomes identified with that of the academically affiliated and employed poet-author himself. And in this reprinted incarnation of the poem, the current Donald T. Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania appears in self-duplicated shadow as both inhabitant and staff of another closed system, a parochialism that also serves as both refuge and prison.

Though I find “Asylum” quite brilliant, the early “Roseland” (not included in *All the Whiskey in Heaven*) would nevertheless have been my preference for his compendium’s opening poem.



Though similarly constructed, this beautiful piece is made of phrases quoted from a talk by fellow poet David Antin. The inclusion of the less academically inflected “Roseland” right up front would have nicely embodied an acknowledgement of Antin and Antin’s poetics, a debt Bernstein has recognized elsewhere. Here (rather than with the more ironic appropriation of “Asylum”) is where I myself would have liked to see the book begin. For even in the printed version of “Roseland,” there’s palpable yet cautious enthusiasm about the possibilities for “a literal culture,” an innovative poetic of improvisatory “talking poems” that hearkens back to the Homeric rhapsodes. If the claustrophobic “Asylum” circumscribes the topic of poetic career, “Roseland” gestures with the expansiveness of vocation.

Anyone familiar with the movements of twentieth-century art will recognize that Bernstein’s appropriation of other peoples’ words is analogous to Marcel Duchamp’s readymades (works based on the proposition that gallery or museum context changes found objects into “art”). So, too, the formal range of Bernstein’s poetry corresponds to (as he himself is personally linked with) the New York art world since the sixties: The use of Madison Avenue jingles and sales pitches mimics Warholian Pop. “The Year as Swatches” or “Dodgem” effectively exploit a Minimalist aesthetic. “This Poem Intentionally Left Blank” can be seen as a product of Conceptualism. “This Line” embodies the semiotics of postmodernism, mocking its own rhetorical approaches even as it employs them: “This line is no more than an / illustration of a European / theory.” Such divergences in methodology indicate either that Bernstein doesn’t really know what he’s doing, or else he’s using his sense of formal dissatisfaction (which is, indeed, palpable) as a

goad to try something different.

Though sprung from strong emotions or complex thought rather than within the confines of received form, some of the latest work has a considerably less contemporary feel, particularly those poems whose sound-shape is close to song. The rhyming lines of “The Ballad of the Girly Man,” for example, are resonant of Bert Brecht, though their “alienation effect” is not really Brechtian. In such genuinely moving lyrics the reader is pulled in by a false sense of lyric accessibility or familiarity even while knowing full well the manipulative rhetorical tactics in use. In his theatrical works (his California poems being one exception) the heartless Brecht never managed that. Yet Bernstein, too, is capable of great lyric composition (for example, his very beautiful Gilbert Sorrentino-worthy “Castor Oil”) free from all levels of jargon and ringing perfectly true.

I have to confess that I’m not convinced that all the tonal, as well as formal, instabilities in Bernstein are completely intentional, though perhaps it doesn’t really matter. To me, the way his lyric speaker uses irony to distance himself from feeling (invisible air quotes regularly in effect), then injects an almost sentimental lyricism to balance it back, is related to a distinctive emotional bipolarity I associate with the streets of Manhattan. In many Bernstein poems, New York seems not merely a backdrop but an alternately prickly and affectionate recurring character. For the poet, the shared trauma of 9/11 resulted in the blog-like, nearly free-writing exercises of *Some of These Daze*, from which the journalistic “Report from Liberty Street” is taken. Some critics have expressed admiration for this poem’s on-site observations and haunting refrain, “*They thought they were going to heaven,*” but my own preference remains for the less easily accessible beauties contained in Bernstein’s cityscapes of twenty years earlier:

In the summer
blackouts crippled the city & in the winter
snowstorms: & yet the spirit of
the place—a certain *je ne sais quoi* that
lurks, like the miles of subway tunnels, electrical
conduits, & sewage ducts, far below the surface—
perseveres.

So, too, the formal experimentation and tonal range of Bernstein’s *Selected Poems* have now survived the most conventional of contexts. My own hope is that his recent movements toward traditional lyric are yet another feint. Otherwise those who’ve preferred to see his work in more experimental bindings might begin to fear (quoting a Bernstein poem not included in *All the Whiskey in Heaven*) that “the bonds of trust” have been “sold for success.” It’s a little spooky to read reviews citing him as a “prominent” poet with “razor-sharp” wit who has found a “hard-won” clarity—even while such universalizing (and neutralizing) descriptions are, as a matter of fact, perfectly true. But in any event, whatever the poet has next in mind, with

this recent entry into the verse oligopoly a fearful yet inevitable paradox may kick in: As his work becomes more familiar and his influence more acknowledged, Charles Bernstein himself will grow less and less important. For what he has written about the poetry reading as a social and cultural form might even more meaningfully be applied to marginalized poetries and poets themselves: *It is a measure of their significance that they are ignored.*

MARY MAXWELL's work as a poet, critic, and translator has appeared most recently in *Salmagundi*, *Vanitas*, and *Yale Review*. She is also the author of a monograph, *Serena Rothstein: Discourse in Paint*, published by LongNookBooks.

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The Tyranny of Milk

By Sara London

Four Way Books, 2010

A BOOK REVIEW BY KIRSTEN ANDERSEN

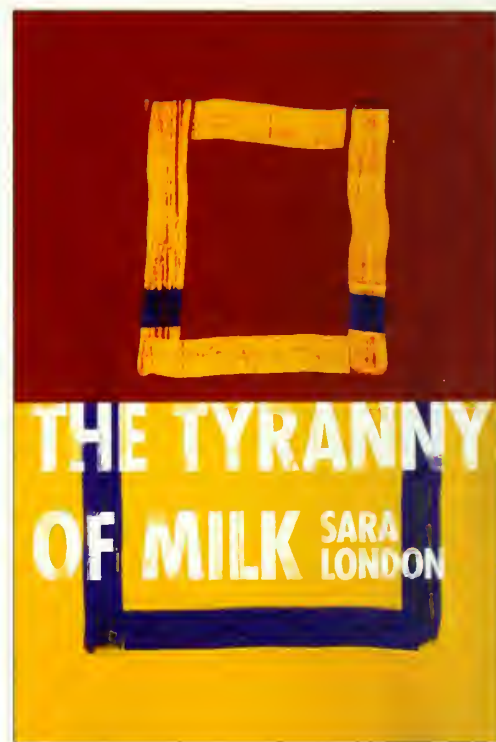
SARA LONDON'S debut poetry collection is titled *The Tyranny of Milk*, but it's her evocative meditations on water that steal the show in the book's linked narratives of particular, human experience. We encounter "the frozen surface of Lake Champlain"; the "oblivious ballad" of rivers; a neighbor's pond; and "the dark Atlantic"—all of which function as interactive backdrops for the image-driven poetry that unfolds.

Early in the book, London gifts us with the powerhouse poem "Cold War": the story of a father's strange and reckless compulsions as he drives across frozen lakes and ponds, his children in the "scooped vinyl cushion of backseat." This important poem functions like a light switch, illuminating several of the book's recurring concerns: parental influence and its aftereffects, the shifting shapes and functions of love and marriage, our bottomless longings and mysterious sets of sorrows.

The ice thaws as the collection progresses, and in "Trespassing" we delight in a sensuous tale of night swimming in a neighbor's pond. Two sisters have shed their dresses, which are "deflated like angels wrecked ashore," while one husband watches from a raft. The poem's brief, crystal-line tercets pull us through the pond with grace; "Trespassing" is a testament to the economy of London's language, as she manages to plumb the nuanced depths of human relationships in eleven brief stanzas.

Of course, milk also has a principal role to play in this collection: *The Tyranny of Milk's* opening poem, "Cow's Eyes," begins as a rich recollection of a sixth-grade science lesson: "Thirty fist-sized globes / filled with clear jell" donated by a local butcher. As the poem unfolds, these cow's eyes evolve into a symbol of the poet as witness:

Had it seen
things I saw—blue
sky over a muddled
snow-patched hill,




silver buckets like displaced
hats, tipped for sap

London's "valley Jerseys" reappear throughout, and in the book's title poem, there occurs a magical and mysterious conflation, as dinner hosts and guests embody unmistakable bovine qualities: "giant lash fanned orbs" and "hair netted nostrils." Parents are heard "lowing" in the kitchen, and the speaker herself sniffs the air, both bred and bound by the ham-fisted animal nature of familial care and intimacy.

The Tyranny of Milk is a reassuring book, though hardly a tale of pat morality: in London's twenty-six poems, we are presented with versions of complexity—some melancholy, some revelatory, all lyrically resigned to their particular mysteries. In "Why the Water," the book's closing, benedictory poem, we read an oceanic address that seems to blow backward, misting over the collection's mothers and fathers, prisoners and roofers, lovers and children:

We are a strange kind.
Small and wiry.
We weigh nothing. You can hardly
call our clumsy strokes motion.
But so huge
we are in sorrow, so
mired in metaphor and hope,
you would know us by it.
We ask anything.
You have heard us calling, our song
a dim thing at the edge
of your ancient drumming.
Our thirst is unfathomable.
Our heart, hoarding the possibilities,
follows you everywhere.

KIRSTEN ANDERSEN's poetry most recently appears in *Tin House*, *Dossier*, and *Crab Orchard Review*. She lives in Provincetown, Massachusetts.




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Triple Time

By Anne Sanow

University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009

A BOOK REVIEW BY MICHAEL HINKEN

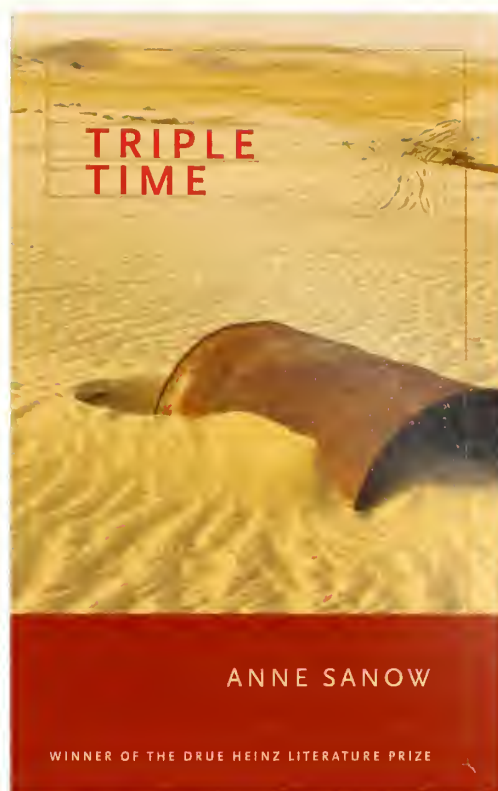
ON THE COVER OF Anne Sanow's debut story collection, *Triple Time*, a rusty oil drum lies half-buried in a dune, an image that resonates with the interests of this collection set entirely in Saudi Arabia. Place and character, landscape and psychology overlap throughout the seven stories, creating a symbiotic relationship that explores themes of isolation, abandonment, and displacement. The writing is rich in detail, often lyrical, and adept at evoking a mood, and Sanow has a good ear for dialogue. But what's most compelling about this collection is its structure. Unlike most short-story collections, which can be read by skipping around—the freedom to pick and choose is arguably one of the inherent pleasures of reading short stories—*Triple Time* instead asks readers to begin at the beginning and read to the end.

To describe the book as a novel in stories or even linked stories would fail to fully define the unique reading experience conveyed by its chosen structure. Instead, the stories seem to be in conversation with each other, trading images, echoing moods, and recontextualizing landscape and characters. Most notably, as the collection develops, minor characters from previous stories emerge in later stories to take over narration duties. In the process they fill in background, deepen the reader's understanding of past situations, and sometimes reveal motivations or clarify the fates of other characters, creating a complex, twofold effect.

First, there's the destabilizing effect of recognition. However, because point-of-view choice initially obscures identity, the reader is unlikely to recognize previously encountered characters right away. Instead, a reader will have constructed an identity for this seemingly new character based on what's happening in the current story. When the moment of recognition occurs, a veil is stripped away. What has been presumed as strange has suddenly become familiar. Consequently, the newly recognized character becomes freighted with the events of before, the relationships and circumstances of the previous story, and, as such, both the current and previous story now bloom with new dimensions of meaning.

Second, the structural choice means the collection possesses a cumulative rather than linear quality. To read the final story in the collection, "Rub al-Khali," is to rediscover and to some extent reimagine previous stories. Through this process a bigger picture emerges, creating a sense of complexity and wholeness one expects when reading a novel.

And yet reading *Triple Time* is not exactly like reading a novel. The effect it produces differs. Instead of a clearly defined narrative arc, distinct causal relationships that point to meaning, or even an identifiable pattern of development or impressions, the sense of wholeness derives



not from a patterning but rather from an accumulation of experiences, images, and mood woven throughout the individual stories. The final story then assembles these component parts by revealing relationships, clarifying intentions, and showing common bonds. As a result, the whole that emerges is less a story one could retell in a traditional, linear sense—that is, describe as having a beginning, middle, and end—but instead the whole is more of an impression of a community. This community is bound not by features such as gender, culture, or even time, but loosely by place and by shared psychological experiences: the particular restlessness that comes when the exotic becomes everyday; the tension of whether to stay or go; feelings of restriction, of being marooned or boxed in; the shifting sense of identity that comes with travel; the sense of displacement that occurs when one is a stranger in a strange land, or even a stranger in one's own land; the crushing weight of boredom.

In the exploration of this community, the collection aspires to enmesh place and character and suggest that one defines the other. Characters in the collection—contractors, army brats, ex-soldiers, oilmen, daughters, and sons—drift through the desert landscape and the streets of Saudi Arabian cities, searching if not for home, then at least for a place to settle. Many of these characters have traveled here in search of easy money, adventure, or escape, but things don't quite work out as planned. Instead, they find a desert too wide or a culture too narrow, and once the allure of the exotic dries up, all that remains is restlessness.

The Saudis who emerge in the collection are likewise concerned with insider-versus-outsider definitions and questions of identity. However, these concerns are not framed so much by travel as by tradition and culture. In one story, a young gay man flees to the desert with his lover to avoid

his family's suspicions. In another, a woman lands in jail after her brother-in-law has her arrested for traveling without her husband or a suitable male companion; paradoxically, while in the jail, the woman experiences fewer restrictions regarding dress and expression than she does in the outside world. Sanow treats such circumstances with a matter-of-fact quality, a decision that lends authority to the telling and also allows the incidents to function more smoothly as components of the individual story rather than a broad cultural critique. As such, feelings of alienation and restlessness cut across nationality and culture in these stories and speak instead to a universal human experience.

Sanow, who lived for a time in Saudi Arabia, possesses a gift for capturing the penned-in feeling many of her characters experience. In "Pioneer," as nine-year-old Chris wanders around the housing compound outside Riyadh, where he lives with his parents, his boredom is palpable. He is desperate for some distraction. Sanow writes:

It is deserted. Each little house is exactly the same—square and white, window screens matted with dead bugs. Curtains are drawn against the sun. All of the cars and trucks are gone. Chris makes his way around the rectangle of the street, dragging his shoes on the asphalt; the noise seems to get sucked up into the air. Finally he sees someone: at the end of the block, where tired palm trees make a thin shade over the picnic tables, there is a girl sitting Indian-style with a book and crayons.

He has a pained conversation with the girl, a conversation that's different from any he's had before because of the way they "trade little bits of information, where they're from and how old." Even the conversation disappoints, serving only to amplify his restlessness and desire to connect with someone.

Similarly, in "The Date Farm," the main character, Jill, longs for connection. She is fresh from her high school graduation in California and has been transported to Riyadh to live with her father, who works for the Army Corps of Engineers. But she's at loose ends—no job, few friends, limited to the compound because she is forbidden to travel alone. The exoticism of the place wearing thin. She would hang out with the other expat teenagers on the base, but "she feels lobotomized whenever she attempts conversation with the few teenagers her age who exist like lizards, sitting in the sun smoking or watching videotapes of MTV." She begins to spend time with Sean, who is older and divorced, and what they share together instead of a real connection or even love is a "companionable feeling. Little is expected of her other than sex and the ability to laugh, both of which feel easy to offer up, are in fact a relief." Characters such as Chris and Jill feel the frustration and loneliness of the expatriate lifestyle, since the basic need to connect is constantly thwarted, often because the landscape and culture limits choice.

Many of the stories in the collection are quiet and impressionistic. Some eschew satisfying resolution in favor of revealing details about character

or larger thematic concerns of the collection on the whole. As a result, on first read, these stories can feel episodic and somewhat too open-ended. Later in the collection, as minor characters from these stories emerge, or as passages are echoed or seen in the context of other characters' experiences, these stories are imbued with greater meaning and their intentions in service of the whole are made clearer. For example, in the final scene of "Hayloader," the main character, Todd, finds himself literally at a crossroads—turn his pickup truck in one direction and he can escape, turn in the other and he will sink deeper into the complications of his current life. While the absence of resolution can leave the reader wanting more at times (see Frank Stockton's story "The Lady or the Tiger"), as an authorial decision, it's predicated on the desire to provide comment that transcends the narrative boundaries of the story. In Sanow's case, what's given in place of resolution at the end of "Hayloader" is a glimpse at the collection's larger themes. Todd at the crossroads operates a central metaphor for nearly all major characters in the collection.

In another story, "Safety," Sanow offers in the place of a distinct resolution, a descriptive passage that seems to, in part, explain a decision made by the main character in the final story of the collection. Fresh out of prison, the main character stands blinking in the sunlight and traffic of a city street:

Across from the mosque the car horns blare and vendors jostle carts and a truck careens around a corner, skidding into the median and then picking up speed again. Down the street there's

a shriek of brakes. Sounds gather together and are overlaid with others. It's past noon prayer; grates rattle up and voices are raised again, sun hits the windows and tosses off blinding glare, everything's shimmering and you can just see the new overpass in the distance, where a caravan of water trucks pulses slowly like a mirage. I blink and they disappear. Back on the street it's hot and the men in white and women in black lean for the storefront canopies where there is shade. I look at everything I know.

Even if resolution is sometimes lacking, Sanow provides in its absence rich description and detail throughout the collection. Another of the strengths of the collection is Sanow's eye for detail. Goats have "side-planted eyes" and totter "roly-bellied" through the land; an irrigation ditch offers "a sweetish tang... along with smoke from a smoldering compost heap"; a camel climbs a dune "in a sloppy diagonal." In the city: "Chickeny orange and yellow cranes jerked and bobbed across the skyline," while a high-rise apartment "throws its glare from the windows like a beacon."

Most impressive are Sanow's descriptions of landscape, both natural and man-made, which highlight her skill at evoking mood. In "The Date Farm," she describes dusk in the desert to join the natural beauty with the character's sense of freedom:

All the way out to the desert they'd been racing toward the sunset, and now, at the top of the escarpment, it is about to bleed into the horizon. The sky wipes into navy, a big piece of dark coming down, flecked with stars.

Or in another example from the same story, a city bazaar evokes a sense of claustrophobia:

They will find their way out now to thrumming Baatha Street, past store fronts with brightly colored fabric hanging from the ceiling, past the glimmering breastplates and ropes of gold in 18 or 21 karats, the perfume bottles and the lingerie, the rugs woven in reddish patterns, the copper pots that throw off the light in luminous glares, out of this cacophonous warren and back into the open sterility of the city where a watchfulness will hover alongside them, until they are home.

On the sentence level and on the structural level, the stories in *Triple Time* offer readers a new way of seeing. These radiant and compelling stories challenge the reader to reimagine what a story collection can accomplish, what sort of an impression a collection can achieve. In the process, the stories transport readers to contested and exotic places—shimmering deserts, sun-blasted high-rises, crowded markets, and abandoned housing compounds—and into the restless hearts of the people who, willingly or otherwise, call these places home.

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Love in Tennessee: A Novel

By John Bowers

Red Hen Press, 2009

A BOOK REVIEW BY J. MICHAEL LENNON

JOHN BOWERS is a literary athlete who has competed with ease and distinction in almost all the generic events: novels, plays, short stories, new journalism, essays, screenplays, history, and memoir. His account of his time in an Illinois writer's enclave, *The Colony*, is a classic. He has put his hand to everything but poetry. But his prose is so epigrammatic, it would only be a matter of laying out the lines in patterns on the page and we'd have verse. E. E. Cummings from Tennessee. Bowers is from the Volunteer State, but he has lived elsewhere, mainly in New York City, since his midtwenties.

In his latest book, a coming-of-age story, Bowers returns home to Johnson City, where his father is a railroad telegrapher and his mother and aunt talk about Dickens and George Eliot and subscribe to the *New Yorker*. Young John is interested in literature, to be sure, but getting his palm on the breast of Mary Louise Luster, or even permitting himself the ecstasy of contemplating such a *coup de foudre*, is what occupies most of his waking hours. Miss Luster teaches mathematics in the high school. "She had watery blue eyes," he recalls, "which I took as a sure sign that she was caught up in some unlawful practices." He grows faint when he considers what these might be. Miss Luster is a pilot and takes students in the Aviation Club up for rides. He volunteers to be first.

She wore what looked like riding britches, laced boots that came up near her knees, and a leather helmet, the flaps of which hung loosely over her ears. Goggles were pushed atop her head. It was an impressive getup. . . . We taxied to the runway. I had a stick between my legs that moved exactly as Miss Luster moved hers in front. I thought of that stick between hers. She told me not to move mine, just watch. She would do all the flying. When the stick moved between my legs I thought of her moving it.

Bowers knows and remembers with clarity that most early sexual experience is waiting, watching, and wondering. Fear alternates with curiosity. The first half of the novel doesn't seem to have much of a plot, just a series of deft approaches, scaffolding around the great secret. He picks up tidbits from his older brother; he watches Miss Luster's bedroom from the roof of his barn; he reads newspaper stories about Peeping Toms. Sometimes there are small bonanzas, as when a trio of black teenagers drops by his barn to put on a show (fully clothed) for him and his friends, for a nickel.

The girl, who was wiry and had skin like grey slate and was slightly shorter than the boys, immediately fell to the ground with her legs spread. A boy jumped in between while she shot her legs around him. They went into a frenzy for a while. . . . There were other positions assumed, we couldn't believe it, all taken

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in a crisp, no-nonsense way. At the end of the performance, which didn't take very long, one boy said, "Anybody here got hairs?" None of us had them. None of us knew what to say.

The novel proceeds something like Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*: a different character with a different problem is introduced in each chapter. But everything lugubrious has been jet-tisoned and it is a lot more fun. We get to know the townspeople—the eccentrics; the pillars of propriety; the famous jocks (including his brother "Trickshot," a basketball hero); the Chong family, who liked the view from the train, got off, and started a laundry; Dr. Mock, the urologist, and Isabelle, his gorgeous receptionist ("you imagined she wore no underwear"); Chauncey Deroche, the Yale graduate and war hero who runs off with Isabelle, leaving his wife and kids; and Bill Gahaggen, the town Lothario, who looks like Clark Gable and was "laying pipe" to Mrs. Carter, the mechanic's wife. She wears pink underwear. Bowers catches a glimpse when he is a carhop at the Sweet Shoppe and brings the couple Falstaff beers and a pack of Camels. It's 1947 and people are jitterbugging and watching Andy Hardy movies. We visit the train station, the hotel, The Pot Liquor Pool Hall, the Singing Teakettle boardinghouse (where Henry Miller was once a guest), the high school, the Andrew Jackson Coffee Shop, and the Tourist Welcoming Center, where Bowers gets a job for \$50 a week after graduating from the local state college.

Everything changes with Sunny Dale, his first love. He has a 1951 Plymouth and money in his pocket. He has been in the army for two years,



gone to college on the GI Bill and read Montaigne and Sophocles; he knows how to order a ham sandwich in French. The difference between ATO and SAE fraternities is a cinch, as easy as the distinction between Mann and Proust. He is as worldly as one could be in that time and place. And he is no longer a virgin, he has hairs. In his senior year in high school, he paid five dollars at the Dixie Hotel for a few minutes with a blonde. "It was my first naked woman up this close. I was

mesmerized and paralyzed. I didn't know what to do. She said, 'Don't tell me you don't know how to fuck.' I didn't. I got on top and did what I'd pictured many times was the way."

Sunny is different. She is a nice girl, goes to church and wears subtle perfume. Her father manages a J.C. Penney store and she works in a dress shop. Her eyes are green and she looks at him in a way no woman ever has before. At first, the romance unfolds as in a Doris Day movie, but then takes off like a rocket ship. In the last third of the novel, we move with Sunny and John around the town we now know as well as our own. We know its layout, its characters, where the trains come in, and where the blacks live (across the tracks), and where the teens go "parking"—remember?

After the generous, nutty, leisurely cavalcade of the first two-thirds of the novel, the story takes a turn. The pace shifts; the air trembles; it's magic hour. The young man we have relied on as our tour guide, the Tennessee equivalent of George Willard in *Winesburg, Ohio*, is transmogrified from observer to something else. . . .

Hey, I thought it was all fun and games with an escape hatch as usual. How was I to know? She may not have known everything—who does? But, as I learned along the way, she knew more. How were we both to know we'd be changed forever?

Bowers is a master of the nuances of heart-break. You don't want it to end.

J. MICHAEL LENNON and his wife, Donna, have lived off and on in Provincetown since 1997. He is writing the authorized biography of Norman Mailer.

The House on Oyster Creek

By Heidi Jon Schmidt

NAL Accent/Penguin Group, 2010

The Postmistress

By Sarah Blake

Putnam, 2010

BOOK REVIEWS BY MARY BETH CASCHETTA

PEOPLE SAY BOOKS are dead, not just the physical paperbound pages and the environmentally questionable ink, but the cohesive magic of narrative itself. With all the immediacy, connection, and realness we gain from digital media, we seem to be losing our cultural grasp on literary fiction, whose purpose we once understood as noble: to show us who we are and how we live. Of course, that was before we became obsessed with ourselves as protagonists thanks to Facebook, Twitter, and reality TV.

As newer generations of book buyers seem to dwindle and the publishing industry creeps ever closer to eBooks or extinction, most writers today know how hard it is to get a good manuscript into print. Which makes it heartening to get to review not one but two disarming, insightful novels that reflect the mysteries of love and loss, war and redemption in two imagined hamlets on Cape Cod.

At the center of Heidi Jon Schmidt's *The House on Oyster Creek* is Charlotte Tradescome, an impressionable woman struggling to address her relationship with a brilliant but emotionally stunted man she once revered and eventually married. An unexpected lucky inheritance allows Charlotte to leave her husband, Henry, once and for all—sort of. She packs up her New York apartment, quits her job as a writer for *Celeb* magazine, and heads for Wellfleet with her three-year-old daughter, hoping to rehab Henry's ancestral home in Tradescome Point and live a carefree existence. Unable to figure out how to live without his younger, more practical wife, Henry sheepishly follows, disrupting Charlotte's plans. As she sinks back into old rhythms, a secret new fantasy life presents itself to her in the form of a handsome oyster farmer, Darryl Stead. As Schmidt aptly unfolds the age-old Cape conflict of spoiled newcomer versus struggling townie, a magnetic force pulls the lovers across disparate stations and into the kind of lust that soon has Charlotte hiding in linen closets and abruptly excusing herself from cocktail parties. But forbidden love goes wrong, as it always does ("Aphrodite is perverse," notes Henry Tradescome), and suddenly the love story we think we are in turns out instead to be no love story at all, but a fantasy of home, a romance of place and family in a magical, irritating town where "you didn't really belong . . . until life had beaten you down a little."

When Charlotte sells a piece of land to an

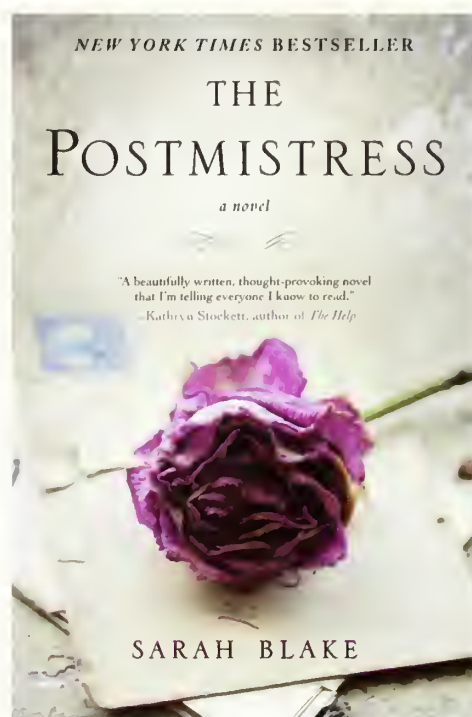


absurdly wealthy couple from Georgia, she inadvertently sets off a town battle, exposing the community's sorest spots with the precision of a surgeon. A conspiracy emerges, giving rise to mysteries involving land ownership and local family secrets, and ultimately allowing misfits of all variety and class to come together in momentary harmony.

Schmidt has a sharp talent for capturing her characters in exacting phrases that leave them pinned and wriggling on the page. The austere Henry Tradescome has long mistaken his polio-damaged arm as the source of his problems, when “the pity was his blinded heart, tap-tapping its grim path through the gorgeous world.” Breastfeeding her baby, Charlotte muses that Henry’s unpleasant father “had been someone’s baby; someone had gazed at his face with this wondering love that amounted nearly to prayer.” As a protagonist, Charlotte finds it “virtually impossible . . . to keep from sympathizing with any person . . . in the same room with her”—explaining perhaps her generous habit of refusing to hold a grudge.

The author’s empathy extends similarly to all her characters. The cashier in a convenience store is “a weathered, sinewy woman,” who slumps her shoulders when Charlotte asks for a bag for her groceries, “as if this were the kind of unreasonable demand she might have expected from such a person as Charlotte.” Observing that the original town is slowly but surely going to ruin, Schmidt writes, “the men gathered at the SixMart counter seemed to know they were becoming picturesque, like the last lions of Africa.” Even the sequestered rich are shown to have ideas that seem “like their furniture—sad and spindly, attempts to strip life of its emotional welter, reduce it to something clean-lined and reasonable.” The overall effect is a fully dimensional world in which bullheaded washashores are treated as evenly as bullheaded locals, proving that what we all have in common is forgivable foibles. If plots wrap up a bit too neatly, it’s only because Schmidt’s world-at-odds is gentler than our own, her version of fate far kinder than the one that exists without such mercy on the real Cape Cod.

Schmidt brings to life many lovably quirky aspects of the Cape: a bouquet of flowers tied to the Sagamore Bridge at the very spot where some lost soul (more desperate than the average resident or passerby) has jumped to his death; the nerve of Boston weathermen, who ignore ocean-effect snow, as if no sane person deserving of a weather report actually lived on the Lower Cape during winter. There is much pleasure in keenly observed descriptions of the physical place, right down to its scent, the “rich brine and sulfur stench of the ebb, and the fresh, sharp scent of high-tide plankton



bloom.” The author also pokes at painful truths: the influx of fool’s money spent lavishly without a sense of context; the stunning hostility of those who got here first, have been here longer; the humiliation of a slur (“New York whores!”) launched out a car window.

“*Change is the nature of a seagoing place,*” says the old woman at the center of the town’s—and the book’s—mystery. “*Everyone makes their mark here.*” The pleasure of this novel is in such perspicuity, its many “aha” moments that reveal what it means to live on the very edge of civilization, where someone always resents having to learn your name, to accept your annoying presence as permanent—at least for now.

SARAH BLAKE’S AMBITIOUS novel *The Postmistress* is so grand in scope, and yet so impeccably constructed, that at times its power seems to defy scrutiny. How does such a complex novel manage to satisfy without ever seeming to reveal the effort that must have gone into its undertaking? The magic of such a feat seems to deepen with each page as Blake’s sure hand moves us to follow three women linked by war and the seaside town of Franklin, Massachusetts—a dead-ringer for Provincetown set during a more innocent time.

The story begins as many Cape stories do, in Boston, where the town’s peculiar and prim postmaster, Iris James, insists that her doctor provide a medical certificate confirming her virginity—an unusual request even in 1940, judging by the doctor’s response. On the bus back to Franklin, Iris meets Emma Fitch, the fragile new bride of the town’s young doctor, whom Iris mistakes for a well-dressed runaway. Emma, meanwhile, pegs the silent older woman as the kind of spinster she is hoping not to be; probably “the pathetic type who reads passion into the twist of a shut umbrella.” Blake’s introduction of unique characters in original situations is both subtle and enticing. How will these very different women get along as small-town neighbors? As the bus

heads down Cape, we are already enthralled, eager to find out where the book is going.

Weaving in and out of her characters’ inner lives through a deft omniscient narrator, Blake spins us into a world just prior to America’s entry into World War II, an era in which radio reports and post office telegrams fuel human drama, and an undelivered letter can have catastrophic results, joining forever the lives of complete strangers.

As Emma settles into her tentative new life, and Iris woos the town mechanic, a third woman, American “radio gal” Frankie Bard, is still just a tantalizing voice we hear reverberating in the background of Franklin’s living rooms and kitchens from ubiquitous radios that are always, it seems, being snapped off: upsetting listeners, the news stories are too tragic, too distant, unimaginable. Except for Iris’s new boyfriend, who obsessively watches for German U-boats off the coast of Cape Cod, the good people of Franklin seem to go about their daily dramas largely unaffected by the darkest and most inconceivable of all human tragedies unfolding across the Atlantic.

Then Emma’s husband, Will, makes a fatal medical judgment causing him to flee to London to join the war effort in search of redemption. Pressing the reader to see what the citizens of Franklin cannot, the author thrusts us into chilling combat scenes, introducing at last our unseen heroine, the remarkable Frankie, who sits bravely taking reporter’s notes, under a sky of falling German bombs. In the tradition of the great newscasters of her time—a few of whom even appear as characters in the novel—Frankie’s sole purpose is to tell what she sees, to spare no detail, to bring home the truth about war. Blake brilliantly juxtaposes intensely crafted scenes of war with Frankie’s attempts to report what she (and we) have just experienced.

“*There is the sense one gets walking around London of a God grown sleepy,*” Frankie recounts, “*tired of holding the whole vast world in His gaze, tired of making sense—so that shards of glass dagger babies in their beds, boys come home to empty houses, and the woman and the man who had just lain down to sleep are crushed.*”

Blake brings Frankie together with the wandering Will in an unlikely meeting whose contrivance threatens to tear slightly at the fabric of the well-wrought fiction. Yet as the two argue in an air-raid shelter in London’s underground station, the electrifying exchange about the meaning of it all—life and war, the mutability of fate—takes over and the jarring encounter is tucked smoothly back in, fastening the heart of this novel to the very philosophy of randomness and chance. “Whatever is coming, comes,” Will says, but the idealistic Frankie refuses to accept his fatalism. Dark outcomes are “helped by people willfully looking away,” she declares.

Walking along the dark London streets between bombings, Will sees his fellow survivors lit by the tips of their Lucky Strike cigarettes. “Those tiny red lights in the dark going forward and moving away, those single Lucky Strikes, that’s what it was to be human,” he realizes. “We lived and died, all of us—lucky strikes.”

While Will’s discovery that human misfortune

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cannot be stopped allows him to forgive himself at last, the revelation that comes to Frankie is more painful. Getting her big break, she follows persecuted Jewish families out of Germany, only to realize that her assumptions about warfare and war stories—paralleling, perhaps, our own—have been naive. As Frankie records interviews on train after train overflowing with terrorized refugees, she inadvertently prevents the escape of one interview subject, learning too late that being an observer can be as dangerous as stepping into a story to intervene. As the novel turns a yet more contemplative eye to the human condition, Blake's writing begins to shine even brighter: "All the while Frankie was recording voices, looking into faces of people whose ending she worried she'd never know, *she* was the ending. She was the scissors. And she had thought she was the thread."

The America to which Frankie eventually returns is steeped in indifference, more interested in lunch than in the senseless loss of life unfolding not so far away. It seems clear right away that though Frankie has been earnestly reporting the war, trying to tell a truth that eludes her, no one has actually been listening. At a bar in Grand Central Station with her boss, she numbly observes what passes for danger at home, as "one of the waiters crossed through the smoke with a tray held high on his way to the kitchen, and the people leaned away."

Blake's characters whirl around weighty questions that at times leave the reader spinning: Why do we perpetuate the brutal human tragedy of war? How do people go on living when others are suffering, dying, being shot in the streets? Is it ever possible to tell a story that gets at the savage heart of war? When is a story ultimately more powerful than its storyteller?

A final twist of fate brings Frankie to Cape Cod, where she finds respite but continues to be haunted by the voices of war. Seeking out Emma Fitch, she cannot make a connection. In the post office, she clashes with Iris James, whose protective impulse toward the abandoned Emma has led her to withhold a piece of mail. Ultimately a redemptive novel, Iris does manage to deliver at last the novel's most crucial of all messages—something Frankie cannot bring herself to do. With the convergence of these three characters, Blake brilliantly brings her complex plots together, highlighting a plausible answer to the novel's many challenging questions: we are all connected; our stories are inextricably entwined.

Today we are, as then, a country at war, a people who could benefit from a long, hard look in the mirror. This transcendent book offers important reminders and inspires serious self-reflection. What would happen if we stopped to consider the world raging out there while we sat eating lunch? Blake's intelligent rendering of who we are and what we become during war is powerfully apt—and ultimately unforgettable.

MARYBETH CASCHETTA is the recipient of a W.K. Rose Fellowship, a Sherwood Anderson Foundation Fiction Award, and a Seattle Review Fiction Prize. She is currently working on a book of nonfiction.

The Whale: In Search of the Giants of the Deep

By Philip Hoare

HarperCollins (Ecco), 2010

A BOOK REVIEW BY DENNIS MINSKY

IT WAS A DAY LIKE any other, nothing to complain about. Threatening weather held off. The whales had not been dramatic—but there were enough of them, and the passengers had been nice, a few even interesting. This was my sixth continuous day whale watching, and most of those days had three trips—that's three times out, three times the spiel, three times finding the whales, three times back—six long, twelve- to thirteen-hour days. I had been on whale watch boats for at least ten years, and worked on virtually every boat out of Provincetown: the old *Ranger*, the *Portuguese Princess*, the *Dolphin*, and the research craft for the Center for Coastal Studies. The challenge—then and now—has always been to keep it exciting for me, not let it settle into a routine, and to keep in mind the magic that exists out there in the whales. If I am genuinely excited, the passengers will be as well.

In the wheelhouse, Captain da Lomba, on his thirty-second cigarette of the day, peers through the smoke and the windshield at Long Point, just coming into view, and says, "Tomorrow we got some special people comin'—some British guy and a film crew. He's writin' a book about whales."

"So what is it," I asked, "a book or a film?"

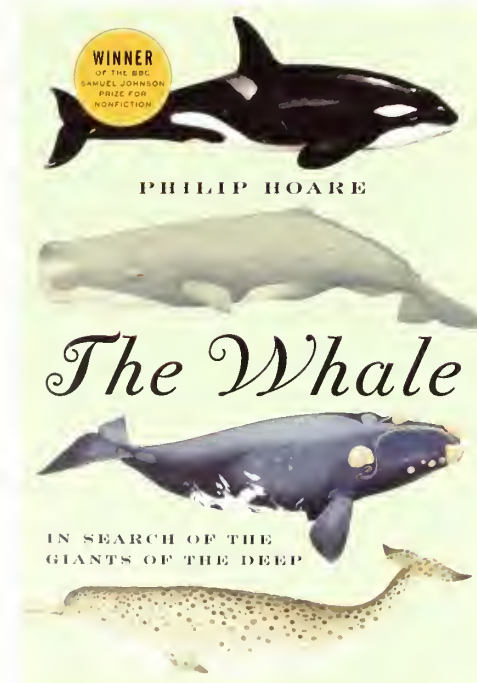
"Damned if I know," he replied.

The next morning the weather was not cooperating; large dark clouds scudded over the harbor and beyond into the bay. It was trying to rain, and the flags out on the wharf (American, Portuguese, and Rainbow) were whipping furiously in the wind. Regardless, with some trepidation, we were getting ready for the first trip of the day. As I set up my naturalist's station, I spied a motley crew coming down the gangway: a slender man in a peacoat and watch cap, carrying a canvas bag over his shoulder, followed by two others carrying tripods, cameras, and other types of equipment. The first guy had the air of a kid on his way into a candy store; the other two lumbered after him, under their burdens.

"Ah," I remembered, "the writer and the film crew!"

I soon learned that one of the lumbering gentlemen was award-winning director Adam Low, and the other was Martin Rosenbaum, a BBC producer of note. And the slender fellow in front was none other than Philip Hoare, a writer with several books under his belt—best-selling biographies of the aesthete Stephen Tennant and playwright Noel Coward, along with other books with historically British themes.

Now he was all about whales. How exactly Philip Hoare journeyed from Noel Coward to the world of whales is not entirely known or easily described, but there is no denying the fact that it has happened. Nor can there be any doubt that it has been a successful journey: his most recent



book, *The Whale: In Search of the Giants of the Deep*, received the prestigious BBC Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction in 2009, and the associated film, *The Hunt for Moby-Dick*, has been shown to critical acclaim at film festivals from Provincetown to Vancouver, from Mantua, Italy, to Dingle, Ireland. And, since that first rainy encounter, Philip has become my good friend. In addition, on his frequent visits to Provincetown, he has logged dozens and dozens of whale watches, and joined cruises on the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies research boat, the *Shearwater*. He has also traveled the world in search of whales and in study of the history of whaling. He is perhaps the ultimate whale-head.

The transformation of Philip Hoare models our new relationship with whales. We explored aspects of this relationship last fall in a two-hour interview in the old Herring Cove Bathhouse, where the roar of the ocean echoed in our conversation.

Philip Hoare first came to Provincetown in 2001, not to pursue whales, but to visit his good friend, John Waters. Waters had quite favorably reviewed Hoare's first book for the *New York Times Book Review*, had hosted him in his native Baltimore, and invited him to Provincetown to check out the scene.

However, after Waters described Provincetown as "a gay fishing village," Hoare had some misgivings: "Do I really want to go there? It sounds a bit *mad*! I arrived here by train from New York to Boston, took the ferry over, and disembarked on what I now know to be MacMillan Wharf. This rather bizarre industrial chimney was looming overhead. I had no idea that it was the Pilgrim Monument. I trundled my bags uptown and stayed at the White Horse Inn."

Provincetown was an immediate fix for Hoare—not whales, but people: "These people who end up funneled into this little sandy spit of land held out into the Atlantic. It is almost a cliché now, but I do always think of Thoreau saying 'a man may stand here and put all of America behind him'—the

notion of rejecting the ordinary, the orthodox, the mainstream, that really did make me feel comfortable—and, you know, I am talking as an ex-punk rocker, someone who all my life rejected the orthodox. What John introduced me to, almost by accident, was this incredible cast of characters that make up Provincetown—starting with the White Horse Inn, and its owner Frank Schaefer, but, quickly, I met others like Pat de Groot, Mary Oliver, and Molly Malone Cook.”

To follow Hoare’s leap from people to whales, the reader must go to his book, in which he describes his early fear but eventual fascination, an obsession really, with water, with being in water, and with the animals that live in water. Now he acknowledges John Waters’s appellation “whale stalker,” if not the charge that he circulates “whale porn” in his photographs of whales. “All my books are about obsession,” he said.

According to Hoare, *The Whale* “moves from childish awe and wonder and fear to an adult’s appreciation, from a natural history point of view, from a historical point of view, and from a cultural point of view to what our fascination with cetaceans consists of.” For some, fascination leads to obsession. It is from and through his personal obsession that Hoare writes about whales. The boy whom water terrorized is the man who taught himself to swim in it and made “some kind of pact with it” and now must swim “every day in the sea, which I do in Southampton and I do in Provincetown. I swim every day of the year—whatever the weather, whatever the temperature—but every time I go into the water I am still scared, still scared of what’s underneath me.”

The boy whom water terrorized is the man who swam in three-mile-deep water in the Azores toward a pod of sperm whales: “They are the world’s biggest predators and I must admit that, at that point when I was sharing their environment with them, swimming through this profound blue towards these creatures, I was more excited and more fearful than I have been in my life. My heart was literally beating against my rib cage.”

Whales have increasingly taken hold of the public consciousness since their virtual popular rediscovery beginning in the 1970s. Millions of words have been written about them. Still, the descriptions do not satisfy; the summaries lack vitality and feel incomplete. Hoare’s value as a writer is to insert himself into this continuum of verbiage, this continuum of earnest efforts to connect with the nonhuman Other. The question remains—what brought Philip Hoare from Noel Coward to the whales? Consider the passage early in *The Whale*: “In their size—their very construction—they are antidotes to our lives lived in uncompromising cities. Perhaps that’s why I was so affected by seeing them at this point in my life. I had come to witness whales, to believe in them. I had come looking for something, and I had found it.”

In this expression Hoare becomes the contemporary brother of Ishmael; who early on in *Moby-Dick* describes “your insular city of the Manhattoes posted like silent sentinels around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Nothing will content them but the



JO HAY, *THE PRINCE OF WHALES* (A PORTRAIT OF PHILIP HOARE), 2010, OIL ON CANVAS, 66 BY 48 INCHES

extremist limit of the land.” And later, he states, “Though I cannot tell why it was exactly that those stage managers, the Fates, put me down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage. Chief among these motives was the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself.”

Ishmael is never far from Hoare’s thoughts. Earlier in his otherwise literate life he had had the typical difficult reading experience with Melville’s seminal work: “But after my first visit to New England, I looked at it again; just as I was ready to see whales, I was ready to read *Moby-Dick*.”

The spirit of Ishmael’s hunger, his curiosity, his sense of complete deliverance unto the idea of the whale (and a dash of Ahab’s obsession as well) is merged with Philip Hoare’s. We know this when he describes animals “possessed of a supernatural physicality . . . yet . . . mutable, dreamlike because they exist in another world . . . because they look like we feel as we float in our dreams. . . .”

Early in *The Whale*, Hoare describes the first (late nineteenth-century) attempts to keep wild whales (belugas) in captivity, all doomed to failure and excruciating death for the unlucky animals. It is his contention that some of these despairing whales actually committed suicide. These early efforts amount to an allegory of the innate human desire to contain the Other, which is necessarily self-defeating. We murder to dissect. Things only got worse, however, as the whaling industry peaked in the mid-twentieth century (although it is still very much with us), and whales became nothing more than commodities. One of the many revelations in *The Whale* is the extent of twentieth-century whaling; more whales were killed in one year than in all of the nineteenth century.

But then came the 1970s and worldwide environmental awareness, Jacques Cousteau and the possibilities of the Sea, and the beginning of commercial whale watching. Thousands and thousands of people, especially in America, especially in Provincetown, were encountering whales. What to make of them? The difficulty in capturing in words the incredible bulk, the amazing size, the

exotic natural history of these animals is perhaps the first experience (after delight, perhaps tinged with just a bit of fear) that the viewer has. It is a challenge for anyone. The scientists among us bluster on with facts, facts that do not entirely satisfy. Remember Dylan Thomas in *A Child’s Christmas in Wales*, complaining about “books that told me everything about the wasp, except why”? The eco-spiritual-evangelists go so far as to treat whales as our equivalents, foreign nationals, with all our attributes. On a whale watch a few years ago that had very few sightings, a woman from this tribe remarked to me: “The Humpback from this tribe is in turmoil.” Is there a happy medium? Is there a way to capture the wild essence of the whale on its own terms, without hyperbole and the ultimate pitfall, anthropomorphism (defined by Jeremy Mynott as “ascribing to animals what are distinctively human emotions, purposes, and capacities” and later as “the cardinal sin against objectivity”)? For each of us, this is a work in progress.

Philip Hoare contributes to this dynamic: “I do feel emotionally attached to them. And that’s a difficult thing to talk about as a writer, and as someone who is trying to write or make a film about whales, because you do not want to fall into the trap of anthropomorphism, or new-age pseudo-science, pseudo-theory; nonetheless, when you are faced with these animals in the water there is something transcendent about their presence—something that defies explanation, defies categorization. That’s the spirit I try to convey.”

From Philip Hoare and a close reading of *The Whale*, I learned a whale is a large animal that lives in the water, but at the same time is part of the natural world that includes us and our cultural history. Language is also part of our world and is referential by nature. Therefore, what we say about the whale, how we describe it, says as much about us as it does about the whale. As the best and most extreme example, we have Ahab investing the great white whale with evil. If we attempt to remove all vestiges of our experience from the description, we risk damning it to a pale abstract that ultimately fails. If we go too far in “humanizing,” we lose our way as well. Even the naming of the whales (over two thousand humpback whales in the Gulf of Maine have been given names; the first was “Salt” in 1976) implies a relationship with the animals that is not truly there. This is the dynamic tension that exists in each of us as we approach the leviathan.

Hoare says, “If my book has any power at all, that’s where that comes from, because I am living this story. I’ve seen grown men cry when they’ve seen their first whale. It’s an emotional thing. I don’t think we should decry that, really. Ultimately it is a necessary thing.”

Melville writes of the sperm whale in *Moby-Dick*, “Dissect him how I may, then, I but go skin deep. I know him not, and never will.”

DENNIS MINSKY, a resident of Provincetown since 1968, is a writer and a naturalist. He has worked with Cape Cod National Seashore and the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, and serves on four committees that promote conservation on the Outer Cape.



TENA LOVELAND RUSS PHOTO BY BRIAN LIPCHIK

Daisy: a novel

BY TENA LOVELAND RUSS

NESTLED WITHIN the rustling cornfields of Paradise, Wisconsin, is the café where Daisy, an eighteen-year-old Eurasian adoptee, toils as a waitress and studies the cooking techniques of her beloved chef mentor, an aging Vietnam veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder. Chopping onions isn't the only thing that brings tears to Daisy's eyes. She is the devalued daughter of an exquisite woman who charms almost everyone.

When Daisy receives an invitation to a benefit concert in Chicago, her mom dismisses the card as junk mail. Two Chinese characters handwritten on the back tantalize Daisy. Her search for her biological roots and family connection will lead her on a journey to Chicago's exotic Chinatown and the elegant Gold Coast, as well as through some uncharted emotional territory.

My family is not Chinese, but my grandmother had an affinity for Asian art and artifacts. Her three ancient statues of Quan Yin, the Buddhist goddess of compassion and enlightenment, are now in my home, totems of my grandmother's unconditional love. The reverence for the bonds of true family—whether assembled or inherited—is at the heart of my novel.

Excerpt from

Chapter 1: Chinese Eyes

THE HOLLANDAISE RECIPE I'd intended to clip from the newspaper was somewhere in the kitchen recycle bin. I sifted through a week's worth of newspapers, discarded bill envelopes, magazines, and catalogs that advertised goods and services we didn't want or couldn't afford—cosmetic surgery, the Grand Tour of Europe, wristwatches as thin as a communion wafer. Tucked in the pile, to my surprise, was an envelope hand addressed to me, Miss Daisy Pettersen. The return address was unfamiliar, the Chicago Arts Alliance on Lightner Street. I slid my finger under the flap and pulled out a card printed in blood-red ink.

Save the date!

*August 1 benefit performance given by
distinguished alumnae*

Hiroko Kim, Marissa Ossorio, and Jasmine Li Wang

The Chicago Arts Alliance

More information to follow.

Why would I care about a benefit in Chicago? In sleepy Paradise, Wisconsin, population 6,300, give or take, I was hardly in a position to be a benefactor of the arts. I tossed the card into the bin, where it landed upside down. Something scribbled on the back caught my attention: Chinese writing! It had to be. One character resembled the number nine with a slash across the middle and some dots. The other one looked like a stick figure wearing a ten-gallon hat and cowboy chaps.

"Whoa," I said.

"Whoa, what?"

At the table, in a cage of lemon-colored light, Mom was an Impressionist portrait, *Woman in a Blue Bathrobe*. Everything about her invited your gaze to linger—her movie star profile, her flawless complexion, even the gentle curve of her neck where Dad liked to rest his hand. Her hair, slung in a loose ponytail at the crown of her head, was naturally the color of ginger ale, a shade that sold peroxide by the gallon.

I padded barefoot across the hardwood floor. As I approached, a waft of her favorite perfume, a blend of lilac and orange blossom called *Femme*, reached my nose.

"This," I placed the invitation on the table.

Mom raised her eyes from *Self Magazine* to give me an appraising look. With the delicate lift of her bird-wing eyebrow she said, "You might want to change into something more modest if you're going walk around the house. The boys, you know."

"Mom, it's six thirty. The boys are still asleep. Besides, brothers don't count as men."

"I can see through your nightgown. I thought you'd want to know, dear."

"Message received." I pushed the invitation next to her magazine. "Look at both sides. What do you think it means?"

She flipped the card over. "'Be there or be square?'"

"In Chinese?"

"How would I know? You're always on the Internet. You probably got yourself on some mailing list."

"Mass mailings aren't usually addressed by hand."

"Sometimes they print it like that to fool you into thinking it's real handwriting."

I licked the tip of my finger and swiped it across the ink. "Gel pen."

"I get all kinds of solicitations for donations." The invitation passed through her mental shredder.

"I'm not being asked for money, only to save the date," I said.

"Here's something that might interest you since you want to be a chef," she said. "Eggs can help you lose weight. Protein fills you up so you're not as hungry later in the day."

Neither of us needed to lose weight. "I don't think this is junk mail," I said. "For one thing, they spelled Pettersen right, with an *e* and not an *o*, and they know I'm a Miss, not a Mrs."

"If I were you I wouldn't waste my time worrying about it."

She probably wouldn't, but then, she knew who she was. My Chinese eyes are the legacy of unknown ancestors. I scooped the card from the table and slid it into the envelope, leaving her to ponder the benefits of eggs.

I took the back stairs two at a time, moving past the bedroom that had been mine until Gran came to spend her final months with us. At the third-floor landing, I passed through a pair of curtains made of gauzy muslin, tied back with cord. The attic was roughed-in but not finished, so Dad and I had stapled white sheets to the studs to create walls, an effect reminiscent of the *Arabian Nights*. A breeze from the windows or from my fan made the walls seem to breathe. I could breathe up there, too.

I flopped down on my bed and stared at the card that Mom nearly threw away. Given my mysterious heritage, the Chinese characters evoked more than idle curiosity. I'm illegitimate, or euphemistically put—a lovechild. In my dictionary, illegitimate was defined as "one born out of wedlock, not sanctioned, with no hereditary rights." To me, it was a synonym for being demagnetized from true north and set adrift.

To say that I missed my birth parents wasn't totally accurate. You couldn't miss someone you didn't know. I lacked them, certainly, but missing them would have implied some kind of relationship. They were phantom limbs. Even if I tried to find them, I couldn't search the adoption records until I was twenty-one, in three years. All the agency would reveal was that my mother was a healthy twenty-five-year-old woman of Chinese descent and that she was single. With no direct exposure to Chinese culture or actual Chinese people, my knowledge of the subject was limited to what I'd read and the Internet.

I opened my new laptop, a combined eighteenth birthday and early graduation gift, and began a Google search. The Chicago Arts Alliance was easy to find. It was a residence for young women artists and musicians. It looked like someone's old mansion with a curved porch and wide

steps leading to the front door, very gracious, very la-de-dah. I bookmarked the page and searched for a Web site that showed Chinese characters and their meanings.

According to one Web site, there were more than 100,000 Chinese characters. At the top of the list were the most frequently searched: love, strength, peace, and happiness. The ones on the back of the card weren't any of those. I clicked through link after link until they all began to look alike. What made it ever harder was that I was trying to find two characters together, not just a singleton. I found characters representing numbers, popular phrases, proper names, astrology, and attributes such as loyalty, kindness, harmony, creativity, and even stubbornness.

I'd been accused of being stubborn. It wasn't so much stubbornness as self-defense. Under my feet, a deep, hidden fault was prone to sudden shifts, and like a seismograph, I sensed the tremors. To steel myself against the possibility of catastrophe I clung to the books, CDs, clothes, and assorted memorabilia—the cognitive maps of my life—that kept accumulating in my bedroom. I knew where I belonged in the rubble. I clung to implausible dreams, too, like the one where Mom saw me for whom I was and not as a reflection of her own lovely self. Not that I wanted to be a pale copy of the original, which would have been impossible in any case, I wanted to be of her, of her heart, a person dear to her for whom she would go to the ends of the earth.

Meanwhile, there was life between dreams.

IT WAS SUNDAY, and Mom, Dad, and the twins were about to push off for their weekly dose of dogma. To Mom's dismay, I no longer shared her traditional religious convictions, but entertained my own suspicions. When I refused to attend church, she worried that I would go to Hell. To placate her, I told her I would meditate and put in a private word with the Great Whomever as needed. *Laissez-faire* was not a religion she could endorse, but I was old enough to make that decision for myself.

My brothers thumped around downstairs as Mom called for them to get a move on. Thirteen-year-olds didn't happily rise before noon on weekends. Mom, probably already perspiring in her navy dress with the white collar, called up to me, "I'll pray for you."

When the minivan's taillights blinked at the end of the driveway, I headed down to the kitchen for a cup of coffee and some quiet time before my shift at the café. While I munched on a bagel, I logged onto my Facebook page. No new messages or comments. I really needed to post a different profile photo—maybe something with a big smile? Jolliness was not my core personality trait. I looked like the straightest geek of all time with my long dark hair parted down the middle and scooped behind my ears. Nothing about me made boys take a deep sigh, but I didn't make them run for cover, either. My face was unremarkable except for my Asian eyes, an anomaly in a town of mostly blue-eyed Germans. I looked up the word *anomaly* the year we studied the *Apollo 13* mission, which blew up and nearly ran out of air before the

astronauts returned from outer space. *Houston, we have a problem.* We have an anomaly. *Paradise, we have a problem.* We have an anomaly named Daisy. If I were a romance writer, I might name my heroine “Anomaly Smythe.”

I read my horoscope: “New information that you receive today should affect the next few weeks in a positive way, Taurus. Evening is not favorable for confrontations.”

The invitation fit the “new information” prediction. As for confrontations, anything was possible with Mom.

Her magazine lay open on the table. She’d been reading an article on teeth whitening. Had she left it out as a hint for me? Her slightest suggestion could reconstitute my self-doubt, and no wonder. Mom, Gloria Pettersen, was born with Presence, a quality that casts a long shadow over a daughter. Unlike the rest of us mere mortals, she’d never had to worry if she’d ever grow into her lips or have a boyfriend. According to her sister Julia, as a teenager Mom had boyfriends stacked like cordwood. Males of all ages stood taller in her presence. Dad’s buddies loved to tell her silly stories just to hear her laugh. She’d listen to their flatteries and then flit away, sated on honeysuckle. I’d heard her gossiping on the phone with her friend Hattie when she referred to her admirers as ninnies. She was blonde to the bone.

I have wondered how her life would be different if she’d been born ugly or worse—to her way of thinking—nondescript. The disadvantage of being born with great beauty is that it has no place to go. Each morning is a step away from the original perfect design, a gift one must surely surrender with regret. I wouldn’t have cared if she looked like ET, if only she had loved me.

Before leaving for work, I brushed my teeth for the second time that morning, making sure there were no signs of insipient dinginess.

SUNDAYS WERE GOOD for tips because people arrived from services freshly reminded to be kinder to their fellow pilgrims. Sometimes the customers were a pain, but I was a favorite of the boss, Sam Zimmerman. Sam was sixty, a Vietnam veteran, and a close friend of Dad, even though Dad was nearly two decades younger. Mom thought Sam was an unsuitable companion for me, which made me like him even more.

The café, a Quonset hut built of corrugated metal in the forties, might have been austere but it wasn’t a gulag as my girlfriend Esmé called it. I preferred to think of it as the mother ship, a place of friendly containment. One woman’s prison is another woman’s sanctuary. Here, I was Sam’s valued apprentice.

The building stood alone on the west side of a two-lane road that led in and out of town. Behind it were cornfields and more cornfields. In late summer, you could hear the constant whispering of the husks, as if a clandestine party were going on out there. Across the street was the post office, a pressure washing service, a truck rental, and a landscaping firm whose piles of gravel and sand, topsoil, mulch, and cobblestones formed temporary pyramids. Several of our weekday regulars came from those businesses. Heading out of

town, towards Sheboygan, was a string of rental houses and beyond that, St. Joe’s, whose bells chimed eleven as I arrived at Christina’s Café. Sam had named the café for his late sister, whom I remember as a sweet woman with a weight problem and hair the color of a nicotine stain. A curling cardboard sign in the window greeted the hungry, “Yes, We’re Open.”

I parked in the back and paused to redo my long hair, which had already escaped its ponytail holder. When I entered the café, the air was warm syrup. At the griddle, six feet four, wearing ancient fatigues and scuffed army boots, Sam flipped an egg and gave me his half-smile. He had one blue eye and one green eye, like unmatched pieces of sea glass.

“Hey,” he said. “How’s things at your place?” Sam was well acquainted with my domestic woes.

“The floggings will continue until morale improves.”

“Aren’t we in a mood?”

Sometimes it was annoying that he knew me so well. “We are not in a mood.”

“Suit yourself. Take this out to four, okay?” He handed me a platter loaded with a patty melt, crisp fries, and a scoop of celery root salad. My mouth began to water.

I snaked a path through the tables—waitress choreography—to deliver the patty melt to table four where a commotion was in progress. A toddler was pitching a fit because the meatballs on her plate were touching each other. Emitting a scream that would make a dog’s ears bleed, the kid launched a meatball at the nearest target, me. It bounced on my forehead with a splat.

In the washroom Ginnie, another server who was my age, snuffed out her cigarette. The room smelled of her Marlboro, cleaning solution, and ancient dampness.

She gave me the once-over. “Someone shoot you?”

I assessed the damage in the cracked mirror over the sink. “It’s a jungle out there.”

“Is it a full moon or something?” she asked. “We sure got the crazies today.”

Scrubbing my face with a grainy sliver of Lava, I watched in the mirror as she applied brown liner to her lips, puffing them into a kiss. Then she adjusted her big hoop earrings, which were all but lost in her perm’d hair. One thing you could say about Ginnie was that she was decorative. She adored jewelry and kept finding new places to wear it. The girl had more piercings than a soaker hose.

“I’m blastin’ off for Chicago next weekend,” she said. She pulled a stick of gum from its foil wrapper and folded it into her mouth with her tongue.

“I’d love to be going anywhere.”

“The last time me and my sister was there we saw a fortune teller in Chinatown. Get this. The lady said I was gonna have seven kids. Can you imagine me with seven kids?” I could well imagine her with seven frizzy-haired kids pouring from her mottled VW bus like marbles from a bottle. “First I gotta find their daddy,” she cackled.

“Chinatown.”

“Yeah, it’s really something. They’ve got some funky food over there, stuff you wouldn’t recognize

as food. Did you know they hang dead birds in the windows where the curtains oughta be? They keep them there to dry or something. Say, there’s a lot of Chinese people down there. Guess you never get to see your people, huh? If I was you I’d for sure check the place out.” After a fogging from a king-sized can of Aqua Net, she gave herself a little wink. “Did I mention that after graduation I’ll be studying cosmetology in Chicago? I am totally over this town and you can quote me.”

“And you can quote me on this,” I said, patting my face dry with a paper towel. “The last words I hear before I die will not be ‘check, please.’”



Excerpt from Chapter 9: Jia

SEVERAL WEEKS PASSED before Esmé and I could synchronize our schedules for the trip to Chicago. When the day arrived, I woke up puffy-eyed and sluggish after a lousy night’s sleep. I wondered if this journey would end up being a boondoggle, as Mom called it. What if she was right and the characters on that card were just some Confucian cliché?

Esmé drove, as always, like a comet entering the earth’s atmosphere. The trip to the Illinois state line went quickly enough, but traffic snarled at the Chicago city limits, where the air smelled like a rusty steam iron. We threw out anchor and listened to five different kinds of music coming from other cars. In the lane next to us, a cute young trucker with a shaggy moustache smiled down at Esmé. Or maybe it was her cleavage that got his attention. She smiled back and they struck up an intermittent conversation as we inched along. When he asked for her phone number, she gave him the number of her father’s mortuary.

“Jerk’s probably married,” she said. “Guys can’t keep it in their pants.”

When we arrived in Chinatown, it was still light enough to look around. We parked Esmé’s crayon-yellow Mustang across from the red gates at the entrance to the district. On Wentworth Avenue, the color red was everywhere, as well as an endless stream of “my people” as Ginnie had called them: old men in shiny black suits, grandmas in gray pajamas, young girls in tighter-than-tight jeans. On a street corner, a wrinkled old lady hunkered over something spread out on a newspaper. When we got closer, we could see that it was a pile of green beans. A small crowd formed to watch her haggle in Chinese with an old man who was almost as tiny as Esmé, who stood five-feet-nothing. At one point the vendor pretended to withdraw her merchandise, but then the man came up with the right number. She wrapped the beans in the newspaper and tied the package with twine. Bowing, she presented the package to him as though it were a gift.

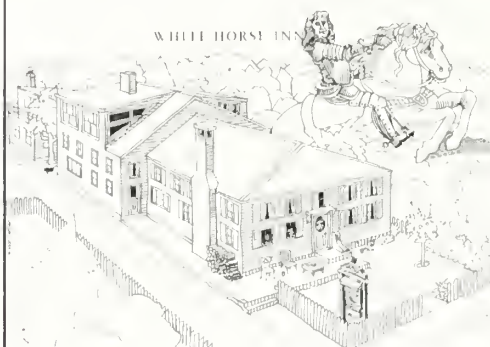
“You hardly ever see that at the Piggly Wiggly,” Esmé remarked.

The shop windows were a jumble of merchandise, some faded as though it had been in the sun for a long time. Grocery store signage written both horizontally and vertically in Chinese

White Horse Inn

Est. 1963

ROOMS & STUDIO APARTMENTS



The White Horse Inn is a 200-year-old Captain's House in the quiet East End directly across from the beach, just a ten-minute walk to the center of town. Our studio apartments and comfortable rooms are all individually decorated with original works of art and antiques.

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advertised food I couldn't identify except for bags of rice stacked like king-sized pillows. I peeked into a narrow shop where glass containers displayed shark fin, roots, and varieties of dried mushrooms. As Ginnie said, there were "dead birds hanging in the windows where the curtains oughta be." These were ducks with caramelized skin. I memorized everything—the sights, the sounds, the airborne encyclopedia of smells—in case I never experienced it again.

We entered a store with a handwritten sign taped to the window: "Help wanted. Mush speak English + Chinese." The store reeked of incense, and a thin wisp teased my face the way a cat rubs against the person who dislikes it most. Behind the register, two bone-thin teenage girls, one in a baby-blue sweatshirt and the other in a faded nylon jacket, spoke in rapid-fire Chinese. Esmé and I were browsing the *tchotchkes* and gift items when the sweatshirt girl, probably thinking we were shoplifters, came over to ask if we needed help. The girl tending the register said something that made the other girl giggle. Nothing builds a taller wall than laughter in a language you didn't understand.

Esmé glared at them. "This place is nothing but junk. Let's get out of here."

The next store had plenty of nice merchandise to admire, such as the brocade, Mandarin-collared dresses in the window. The shop owner, an ancient woman with fingers gnarled like gingerroot, told us in broken English that the local women wore *cheongsams* only on special occasions. Hers were mostly bought by tourists (like us).

While Esmé tried one on, I looked at the

jewelry. A particular pendant in the case caught my eye. The old woman unlocked the case and placed the pendant in my hand. About an inch and a half long, it was carved in the shape of a woman. Her face was serene, with downcast eyes. She wore a flowing gown and carried an armful of flowers.

"Is it jade?" I asked.

The woman nodded. "She is Quan Yin, goddess of compassion."

"She's beautiful."

"You see she stand at river?" She tapped the pendant with her forefinger. "Quan Yin save sailors from drowning. You go on journey, she keep you safe."

I checked the price tag—eighty-five dollars—and returned the pendant to the woman. "Thank you for showing me."

"That's a very cool pendant," Esmé said. Slung over her arm was a green dress that matched her eyes. "I'll take this," she told the woman.

While she debated over which bracelet to buy for her mom, I paged through a rack of T-shirts decorated with lotus flowers, images of Hong Kong Harbor, grinning Buddhas, and sayings written in Chinese. Two characters written on the front of a pink T-shirt looked awfully familiar. I took the Arts Alliance card from my purse and compared the characters to the ones on the T-shirt.

"Es, take a look at this."

She turned to look. "Oh my God, that's it!"

"What does this say?" I asked the woman.

Smelling a sale, her face became animated. "You like? It say 'Mother.' You buy for your mommy. Also have Father, Brother, Sister, Auntie, Uncle—all family. Coffee mug, too."

"It means *mother*?" I repeated.

Esmé was incredulous. "How could you have missed mother?"

"You buy shirt for mommy?"

My hand went to my mouth. "Do you realize what this means?"

Esmé gave me her "duh" look. "It means you have to buy that T-shirt. Take the mug, too."

"I could have brothers and sisters—even grandparents. What's the word for family?"

"*Jia* is family."

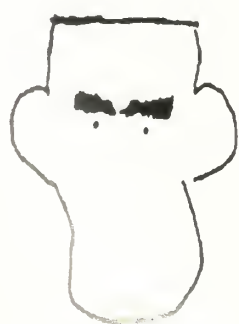
"I could have *jia*."

Jasmine Li Wang gave me away eighteen years ago, before she even knew me. Why did she want to know me now?

I placed the T-shirt on the counter and took my wallet from my purse.

Daisy is TENA LOVELAND RUSS's first novel. In addition to winning the 2009 James Jones First Novel Fellowship, the manuscript was awarded Best Novel-in-Progress in the 2008 William Faulkner—William Wisdom Creative Writing Competition. A portrait artist before turning to writing, Russ's published work includes a series of interviews and features for a Chicago-area newspaper. She and her husband live in a suburb of Chicago with their two dogs, one of whom she volunteers with in a literacy program for young children. Russ is currently at work on her second novel. Also set in Paradise, Wisconsin, it is narrated by Daisy's mentor, whose life becomes unbearably empty when his irreplaceable protégé leaves to begin her career.

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Thoreau's Walk: ARCHITECTURE OF CAPE COD

By John R. DaSilva

"He picked out bright particles that pleased his eye, whirled them in the kaleidoscope of his content, and produced the pattern that has endured—the color, the form, the light."

—E. B. White

From "A Slight Sound at Evening."

E. B. White's essay on Thoreau and Walden



Water Front, Provincetown, Mass.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE POSTCARD COLLECTION OF NAN DUMAS

An early photograph of the waterfront shows fisherman's shacks and wharf buildings in the foreground and numerous Greek-proportioned gables beyond.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO be a creative person in Massachusetts without eventually coming under the spell of the Transcendentalists. On Cape Cod, Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) leads the way with deep insight and biting wit. Between 1849 and 1857, Thoreau made several walking trips on the Cape. He described his experiences in *Cape Cod*, an amazingly prescient book published in 1865 and today seen as an important, if not essential, text in the cannon of Transcendentalism. *Cape Cod* is almost always a starting point for writers considering the Cape. In his 2003 introduction to the book, Robert Pinsky stated that it "remains the place's best portrait." Numerous

others have agreed—reverently invoking, quoting, and borrowing from *Cape Cod*. To Cape writers, Thoreau is a mythic hero and, even as an architect, I feel compelled to follow. In considering an architectural history of the region it is important to look not only to Thoreau's book specifically, but also to the broader ideas that he and his Concord-based Transcendentalist colleagues formulated. Since the late nineteenth century these ideas have had an important influence on the course of architecture on Cape Cod and beyond.

New England Transcendentalism, primarily in bloom from the 1830s through the 1850s, was a late American development in the wider

Romanticism of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Romanticism emphasized individuality, imagination, and emotion, where Neoclassicism emphasized authority, rationality, and reason. In Neoclassicism nature played a role, but it was as sublime mystery—there to inspire sentiment and awe. The Romanticists looked at nature differently. In pursuit of an understanding of character and patterns, they augmented sentiment with scientific observation and taxonomic description. Nature was there to instruct. The Transcendentalists went a step further, to focus on truth over sentiment and on a spiritual connection between man and nature. At the same time they further developed the Romantic notion of individual-as-center into a strong ethic of self-reliance. Thoreau in particular invented a rugged back-to-nature individualism that remains to this day a potent force in American culture.

Thoreau's Transcendentalism is a



DAVID W. DUNLAP, BUILDING PROVINCETOWN

242 Bradford Street, built around 1800, is a classic full Cape of the type Thoreau would have seen all over the Cape. This conservative piece of Cape Cod history was, ironically, once home to the actor Divine and his thrift shop, Divine Trash.



PHOTO: DAVID W. DUNLAP, BUILDING PROVINCETOWN

404 Commercial Street might be Provincetown's grandest Greek Revival. It was built before the Civil War and could have been exactly what Thoreau had in mind when he wrote of his dislike of "pretending" styles. Its proportions have been damaged by the loss of the second-floor balcony and arched attic window.



philosophy in which human consciousness and the physical world are fundamentally linked—a bond that allows truth, beauty, vitality, and moral force to be accessed through a combination of autonomous insight and physical communion with nature. The earth acts on the soul, through the senses, to produce imagination and creativity. Superfluities are stripped away to reveal the self at the center, but as an organic part of nature rather than as its dominator. Rationality and reason are still important but they come to bear through nature and spirit rather than domination and control.

At first glance, Thoreau seems an unlikely influence on the architecture of the twentieth century. It was a century of great industrial and social change mirrored by equal changes in construction technology, architectural form and theory, and urban growth. Thoreau was no fan of such "progress" and most of his commentary on the built environment was strongly negative. He looked to the experience of actual nature and its impact on human nature to save the world from the degradation associated with rapid change. Concord's Walden Pond was an ideal place to ponder the character of intellect and the cycle of life and death, not just through the aesthetic beauty of nature but also through its totality. *Walden* is his manifesto of these ideas. Like Walden Pond, however, he also found the Cape to be an ideal place on which to base his theories, and right from the start of *Cape Cod* he takes a similar point of view.

At the beginning of the trip from Boston, a storm forces Thoreau to use the train rather than the steamship. We know from *Walden* that he didn't like the train and the changes it had wrought: "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us." His theory depended on the total experience of nature through five senses that walking allowed, rather than the dissociation from nature inherent in train travel. So *Cape Cod*

begins with a negative experience, yet he quickly finds a dramatic natural act to help construct his vision. The first chapter is about a shipwreck at Cohasset that he has the *pleasure*, so it seems, to visit during a layover. He describes, with deadpan attitude mirroring that of Cohasset's wreck-experienced citizens, the death and destruction wrought by the storm: "I witnessed no signs of grief, but there was a sober dispatch of business which was affecting." He turns the horrific disaster into an act of beauty:

Something white was seen floating on the water and found to be the body of a woman. I saw that the beauty of the shore itself was wrecked for many a lonely walker there, until he could perceive, at last, how its beauty was enhanced by wrecks like this, and it acquired thus a rarer and sublime beauty still.

At the end of the chapter he implies, without a hint of irony, that perhaps the sublime beauty of nature really had, at last, been perceived. Checking a map for the location in which the wreck took place, Thoreau learns that its name is "Pleasant Cove."

While the idea of experiencing the sublime in nature existed in Neoclassicism, Thoreau's sublime is reachable only through objective experience of actual nature—the horrific included—rather than inward subjective reflecting on fixed natural scenes. The aestheticized picturesque view is replaced with the holistic, real-time experience of unadulterated nature—Thoreau's lifeblood.

In *Walden*, despite his focus on building himself a house, he states his dislike of ever having to be in or around houses rather than out in nature, and he tends toward associating them with death:

Our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed

in them. We have built for this world a family mansion, and for the next a family tomb. The best works of art are an expression of man's struggle to free himself from this condition. A taste for the beautiful is most cultivated out of doors, where there is no house and no housekeeper. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man's abode.

In *Cape Cod* Thoreau continues this assault on man's residences by making fun of the popular pattern book-based residential architecture prevalent in his lifetime:

[Brewster] appeared to be the modern-built town of the Cape. There were many of the modern American houses here, such as they turn out at Cambridgeport, standing on the sand; you could almost swear they had been floated down Charles River, and drifted across the bay. They are the least interesting kind of driftwood to me.

Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852), and the architectural pattern books that he and others produced, were the preeminent tastemakers in residential architecture of the 1840s and '50s. The pattern books sought to refine the architectural aesthetics of the young country and they were illustrated with well-conceived houses in Greek, Gothic, Italianate, Swiss, and other European revival styles. These appealed to the increasing middle class and translated easily into vernacular forms. While the more economical Greek Revival was prevalent on resource-starved Cape Cod, many Gothic and Italianate houses in Downing's vein were also built in the region. Pattern book architecture was based on the romantic idea of choosing styles for historical associations, largely independent of local culture. Although fusing architecture and landscape was important, it was done in a picturesque way, literally as if conceived to be in a painting, rather than as an organic whole. The same house could apply on Cape Cod, in Cambridge, or in Iowa. Thoreau was firmly against these "Styles." Again from *Cape Cod*:

Perhaps we have reason to be proud of our naval architecture, and need not go to the Greeks, or the Goths, or the Italians, for the models of our vessels. Sea-captains do not employ a Cambridgeport carpenter to build their floating houses, and for their houses on shore, if they must copy any, it would be more agreeable to the imagination to see one of their vessels turned bottom upward.

Throughout the book Thoreau continues to be negative about the built environment:

Another writer speaks of [Sandwich] as a beautiful village. . . . I have no great respect for the writer's taste who talks easily about *beautiful* villages. Such spots can be beautiful only to the repentant misanthrope.

He was happiest during his walk from Eastham through Truro. As he left Orleans village

and headed for the open space of the Nauset coastal region he commented:

I was glad to have got out of the towns, where I am wont to be unspeakably mean and disgraced. . . . The towns need to be ventilated. The gods would be pleased to see some pure flames from their altars.

Thoreau had come to rhetorically *burn down your town* and its institutions too:

Our [guide] book said that . . . there was erected in Dennis, "an elegant meeting-house." However, "elegant meeting-houses," in my estimation, belong in the same category with "beautiful villages." I was never in season to see one. Handsome is that handsome does.

His first, and only, positive comments about buildings don't come until the fifth chapter, where he states his preference for traditional Capes that remain, to this day, the most revered local house type:

Generally, the old fashioned and unpainted houses on the Cape looked more comfortable . . . than the modern and more pretending ones, which were less in harmony with the scenery, and less firmly planted.

Pretending is a key word here. For Thoreau, truthfulness of materials, methods, and form was critical to aesthetic success. He revels in the truthful reflection of inner needs that produced the casual designs of the gable ends of traditional Capes, with their combination of small, medium, and large windows following up the rake of a slightly bowing gable shape:

Their garrets were apparently so full of chambers, that their roofs could hardly lie down straight. These were a story and a half high; but if you merely counted the windows in their gable ends, you would think that there were many stories more. The great number of windows in the ends of the houses, and their irregularity in size and position . . . struck us agreeable.

Frequently in the book, Thoreau expresses his fascination with similar plays on scale that he discovered in the landscape. He writes glowingly of "mirages" created by the scalelessness of the wide-open dune, beach, land, and sea:

Objects on the beach, whether men or inanimate things, look not only exceedingly grotesque, but much larger and more wonderful than they actually are. This peculiar open country . . . extends from ocean to bay. To walk over it . . . a stranger . . . finds it impossible to estimate distances. A windmill may seem to be far away in the horizon, yet, after going a few rods it will be close upon them.

Both Thoreau's excitement over scaleless landscapes and his deep affection for the American

ILLUSTRATING

Thoreau's Walk Through Architecture

By JOHN R. DASILVA

May 17, 2010

While my essay *Thoreau's Walk* covers a broad geographical and temporal range—the entire Cape from the nineteenth century to today—Provincetown's buildings provide an excellent microcosm of the regional architecture and village character of much of that period. For that reason, I looked mostly to Provincetown for a photographic record to accompany the essay.

Provincetown's built environment has provided rich subject matter for generations of photographers. Fine art photographers like Joel Meyerowitz, Charles Fields, and many others continue to be inspired by Provincetown's buildings. Until recently one had to rely on their photo-essay books, or older ones, such as Irma Ruckstuhl's *Old Provincetown in Early Photographs*, Samuel Chamberlain's *Cape Cod in the Sun*, or Edmund Gillon Jr.'s *Provincetown Discovered*, to see substantial collections of images without either visiting the Provincetown Museum or seeking out old postcard dealers. With the Internet age, however, anyone can now bring images of Provincetown past and present right to their computer screen.

New York Times reporter and photographer David W. Dunlap has created the blog

buildingprovincetown.wordpress.com with the goal of posting current and historical photographs and historical information on every single building in Provincetown. He is also currently working on a book called *Building Provincetown* to tell the story of Provincetown's history through its architecture. The blog format allows anyone to contribute to this history, and, so far, the contributors list includes many of Provincetown's most committed and knowledgeable historians. It is a truly amazing project that should serve as a model for other architecturally and historically significant communities worldwide. Nan Dumas has created a complementary site, the Facebook group *Provincetown Postcards*, where she has posted her massive collection of Provincetown images on which anyone can comment.

Documenting the built environment is now a collective activity with both historical information and images coming from numerous sources but stored in online virtual libraries accessible to all. This makes for an exciting time for anyone interested in visual history. When looking for images to understand what Thoreau's Cape Cod looked like, and what he might have liked and disliked, Dunlap's and Dumas's sites were invaluable to me.

continent are evident in *Cape Cod*, but they are most lovingly described in his essay "Walking" of 1862. Here he writes specifically of the inspiration the American West had given him. His West was symbolic of the Wild and "in Wildness is the preservation of the world." It is not hard to understand how the author of "Walking" might inspire a predilection toward leaving behind the Old World—and its architectural forms and traditions. Here Thoreau offered personal freedom and rebirth, tied in with national pride, with some of his loftiest rhetoric:

Eastward I go only by force: but westward I go free . . . as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure. The Atlantic is a Leathean stream in our passage over which we have had an opportunity to forget the Old World and its institutions . . . we shall be more imaginative . . . our thoughts will be clearer, fresher, more ethereal, as our sky,—our understanding more comprehensive and broader, like our plains,—our intellect generally on a grander scale, like our thunder and lightning, our rivers and mountains and forests,—and our hearts shall even correspond in breadth and depth and grandeur to our inland seas.

The Old World view of America as a primitive wilderness deserving repression and control was increasingly overtaken through the twentieth

century by the Jeffersonian view of America as a pastoral utopia. Here Thoreau takes it one step further—transforming the pastoral view into a metaphysical one where the landscape functions as an image representing grand American aesthetic, social, and spiritual values.

When Thoreau made it through the "Wild West" of the Outer Cape and reached Provincetown, he again decried the architecture where "a more modern and pretending style has at length prevailed over the fisherman's hut." The simple utilitarian cottage Thoreau had built for himself at Walden Pond was akin to these fishermen's cottages. For the Neoclassicists, the "primitive hut" was an important mythical construct to explain the structural basis of classical architecture. For Thoreau, however, the primitive hut was basic shelter—all that was necessary to simply live as an individual in a life of mindful, sensual, and harmonious interaction with the totality of the natural world. His chosen architecture was certainly employed to make this point.

When he and his fellow Transcendentalist Bronson Alcott (1799–1888) built a summerhouse in 1847, however, for their friend Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) a different type of aesthetic was called for. This writer's hermitage had rustic Gothic peak-topped openings and a dramatic stair of branches twisted into nearly Baroque forms. This was a decidedly bolder,

eclectic, and unique affair that puzzled the less eccentric neighbors who mostly inhabited Concord and Cape Cod. Despite Thoreau's dislike of the "pretending" styles, it is not surprising that he and Alcott tended toward Gothic for Emerson, as it had increasingly been associated with nature. Also, Emerson's smooth worldliness could better accommodate contemporary "Styles" than Thoreau's sharp rigor.

Ironically, the ideas of Thoreau and his colleagues would have a far-reaching impact on the built environment that Thoreau mostly despised. It would take another generation, fierce Westward expansion, and the Civil War, however, before the theoretical individualism and eccentricity of the Concord Salon, described prolifically in the written word but only hinted at in the little summerhouse for Emerson, would have an impact on actual architectural form. The Transcendentalists provided a theoretical basis to move away from the backward-looking revival styles and into a forward looking indigenous architecture based not just on history but also on truthfulness, bold personal invention, a new appreciation of the vastness of the nation, and a perception of nature in organic totality. Transcendentalism was the first American intellectual movement to push back on the environmental exploitation brought by industrialization and Westward expansion and it helped spawn the first American architectural movement to push back on inherited European architectural models.

Paradoxically, the railroad, so reviled by Thoreau, made more accessible the total experience of



DAVID W. DUNLAP, BUILDING PROVINCE TOWN

109 Commercial Street is a classic fisherman's building with the simplicity and honesty Thoreau loved.

nature that he saw as critical, yet it also opened it up for the exploitation he hated. Nineteenth-century advances in photography made images of the bold landscapes and wide-open spaces of the American West increasingly available. The resulting flood of nationalistic independence and self-confidence, combined with the optimism of the post-Civil War era and the theoretical underpinnings of the Transcendentalists, created powerful impetus for this movement away from European models in architecture. Late in his life Emerson criticized the egocentric self-consciousness and rebellious self-reliance of earlier Transcendentalism, but by this time the proverbial genie of sublime egotism was out of the bottle. It was taken up vigorously by the principal American architects of the 1870s-'90s in a quest to create an American architecture bold enough to both stand apart from Europe and to reflect the brash expansionist attitude of the new age.

The revival styles in architecture held firm through Thoreau's lifetime, although there were some rumblings. The Stick Style, with its trim-board grids ordering picturesque assemblages, evolved as early as the 1850s out of the more elaborate "Bracketed" and "Swiss" pattern book examples. Stick Style can be seen as an architectural manifestation of Thoreau's rational organicism, but the link was never explicit and the best examples did not emerge until the late 1860s and early 1870s. The essays of artist and Emerson correspondent Horatio Greenough (1805-1852) exhorted architects to follow a path of functionalism based on the organic unity of nature, but none took up the charge during his lifetime. Literary ideas took time to trickle down into architecture, plus the social turmoil surrounding the Civil War substantially interrupted intellectual progress. The Transcendentalism in intellectual thought of the decades before the war did not start to have its impact on architecture until the great crisis had passed. While the "American

Renaissance" characterization of the prewar era of literature describes an era of intellectual invention, such invention in architecture did not fully develop until the bold new energy of the progressive postwar era, and opportunities to build presented by the bold new economy, were established. The individualism proposed by Thoreau, rather than his conservatism about the built environment, as well as the ethical and moral insistence on truth rather than pretense, are what held sway over the greatest postwar architects even though the literary movement was mostly over and Thoreau was gone.

The leading intellectual architects of this era and point of view were Frank Furness (1839-1912), H. H. Richardson (1838-1886), and Louis Sullivan (1856-1924). Each sought to

create an architecture that was individualistic—identifiable as from their own heads and hands; collective—identifiable as American; and truthful—with direct application of materials and methods. Boston architect William Ralph Emerson (1833-1917), a distant cousin of Ralph Waldo Emerson, was similarly committed to these goals and, along with Richardson and others, helped create the wood-based Shingle Style. All of these architects saw their architecture as within the continuum of architectural history rather than as separate from it, but they were so inventive with old forms and symbols that they succeeded in building a new architecture that avoided the sentimentality of the revivalist picturesque. This was a true renaissance in American architecture—creating in the 1870s and '80s the first sustained period of architectural invention of the New World. This Transcendentalist-fueled invention was challenged thereafter, again by revivalism, but never fully drowned out. It was brought into the twentieth century by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) and taken up by his and Sullivan's "Prairie School" and "Organic Architecture" followers. Like all of the principal Transcendentalists, Greenough, Furness, Richardson, Sullivan, and Wright were members of, or at least sympathizers with, the Unitarian Church, a liberal religion that increasingly took on Transcendentalist ideals through the latter part of the century. They also had strong ties to the Boston area, where even Wright, who most strongly identified with the Midwest, lived for part of his youth.

While Richardson and W. R. Emerson were the only ones to build much, if at all, in Massachusetts, and only Emerson worked directly on Cape Cod, architects who were deeply influenced by all of them did build vigorous and successful buildings in the region. Emerson's inventive use of shingles-as-wrapper and his plastic form-making with wood are evident in his Shingle Style St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Barnstable. The

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PHOTO BY MARK WALKER/COURTESY OF CAPE COD MODERN HOUSE TRUST

The Kugel/Gips House by architect Charlie Zehnder brings Frank Lloyd Wright's Transcendentalist inspired integration of nature and shelter to the Wellfleet Woods. It was recently restored by the Cape Cod Modern House Trust and is once again a woodland retreat of the highest order.

quirky, muscular eclecticism and unexpected scale relationships of Furness are evident in Provincetown Town Hall and the old Brewster Town Hall. Richardson's robust buildings, whether clad in stone, brick, or wood, were based on the earthly dynamics of nature, gravity, and geology. This can be seen in brick at the Eldredge Public Library in Chatham or in wood at the original Shingle Style mansions of Amrita in Bourne. Sullivan's explicitly Transcendentalist ideas about the relationship of architecture and nature reflecting the intimate bond between nature and man were the controlling ideas behind Purcell and Elmslie's "Airplane House" in Wood's Hole. Sullivan and Elmslie's integral ornamental designs were based on naturalistic forms that, in Thoreau's words from *Walden*, "art loves to copy." George Grant Elmslie (1869–1952), designer of this magnificent house, had been Sullivan's chief assistant and worked for him alongside Frank Lloyd Wright. Like Sullivan, Wright also explicitly sought to bring Transcendentalist ideas to built form. His search for an organic architecture that would integrate man, shelter, and nature culminated in his "Usonian" houses that achieved this integration through open plans and careful manipulation of geometry, scale, and materials. Two Cape Cod examples are architect Grattan Gill's house for his parents in South Chatham, horizontally hugging the parallel roadway on one side and vertically marching along like the adjacent woods on the other, and Charlie Zehnder's Kugel/Gips House in Wellfleet, with a dynamic open plan and balanced horizontal and vertical elements that both reach out toward, and comfortably slide into, the landscape.

The contemporary environmental conservation movement, begun in earnest on Cape Cod after World War II, boosted by the creation of the National Seashore in 1961, and steadily gaining steam ever since, has Thoreau's brand of Transcendentalism at its core. Like several

recent socio-environmental movements, the "Green" movement in architecture—focused on environmentally conscious applications of sustainable materials, systems, methods, forms, and relationships—can be seen as originating in Thoreau's notion of redemption through environmental stewardship. This has begun to affect the architecture built on Cape Cod today. The Nature Center building at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, the Applied Technology Building at Cape Cod Community College, and the Woods Hole Research Center are all examples of recent buildings that explicitly have sustainability as, at least, their moral and technical, if not aesthetic, agenda.

Thoreau would probably not like the buildings of Cape Cod, or anywhere, today any more than he did in the mid-nineteenth century. He was so committed to nature as to have little room, intellectually or actually, for interrupting it with buildings. I hope, however, that he would appreciate the impact he and his Transcendentalist colleagues had, and continue to have, on architectural thought. While they never could have anticipated the ends to which architects, or anyone else, would bring their ideas, it is a testament to the strength of those ideas that they are still applicable to both the American cultural scene and its physical environment—and perhaps today on Cape Cod we need them more than ever.

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The Desire for Truth:

Documentary Style in Fiction Film

By Howard Karren



DIGITALLY ANIMATED PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE ISRAELI FILM *WALTZ WITH BASHIR*



THE TSAR'S SOLDIERS ANGLED FOR DIALECTICAL MONTAGE: SERGEI EISENSTEIN'S *BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN*

FICTION, BY DEFINITION, IS FAKERY. But when people watch movies, they want to believe. As they are confronted with an illusion on-screen, there's always a nagging doubt: whether consciously or unconsciously, moviegoers have to *will* the fiction before them into a truth they can accept. It's a process that has been called the "suspension of disbelief." And the reward is synthesized emotion: fear, joy, anger, arousal, empathy, shame, exhilaration, and, ultimately, closure.

As long as the cinema has been around—more than a century—filmmakers have been refining the illusion of the real world and real life that sequences of representational images create. Conventions of camera position and movement, lighting, recording, editing, and even animation, continue to develop and interact with audience expectations. These conventions are unconsciously absorbed—today, preverbal children understand effortlessly the cinematic language that stunned adults when it was first introduced. Over time, the efficiency of movie storytelling keeps increasing, to such an extent that older films often look dated, phony, and cumbersome, even to those who grew up with them.

This phenomenon has happened in other media as well, but the illusion produced by the cinema is essentially unique. The building block of movie language is photography, which, unlike other arts, creates its representational likeness mechanically, independent of human hands. The image can be framed and manipulated, to be sure, and it also can be created from scratch, without a camera, in animation. But the way viewers read and understand movie images grows out of that fundamental reaction of film to light through a lens. Everything else is corollary.

At some early point in movie history, a division arose between documentary and fiction—that is, movies that purport to "capture" a reality that exists independently of what's on-screen, and movies that make no such claim. And, as with other media, the rigid fiction-nonfiction dichotomy is, in itself, an illusion. Documentaries do not faith-

fully "capture" the truth, from Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (which was largely staged) to Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (which is unabashed advocacy). Fiction movies are often "based on a true story," such as the recent Oscar-nominated Israeli film *Waltz with Bashir*, which uses motion-capture technology to digitally animate photographic images and includes news footage of the Sabra and Shatila Massacre in Lebanon. The theory and aesthetics of film art have tried over the years to make sense of this paradox: that documentaries have elements of fiction, and fiction has elements of truth. Audience expectations dictate that the categories exist—moviegoers want to know whether or not what they're seeing is "real"—and while relatively clear examples of both do exist, the blending of fiction and nonfiction is inevitable.

Today, that blending has become de rigueur. And, in fact, documentary "style" has become dominant in virtually every form of filmmaking. So much so, in fact, that it might be worthwhile to question once again what the labels documentary and fiction actually mean, and why we approach them differently. But most important, there seems to be something in the nature of cinema as an art form and as a system of communication that makes the conventions of documentary filmmaking feel like a glove fit. What looks like a historical trend may be nothing less than the destiny of the medium.

Blame it on the Arriflex. Or the Steadicam. Handheld cameras became a regular part of fiction filmmaking after they were popularized by the French New Wave in the early sixties. Jean-Luc Godard (*Breathless*) and François Truffaut (*The 400 Blows*) took their lightweight Arriflex cameras to the streets of Paris, following around their actors without the elaborate setup of tracks or cranes that were commonly used in Hollywood and elsewhere. The Steadicam started showing up in the New Hollywood movies of the midseventies, pioneered by such cinematographers as Haskell Wexler (*Medium Cool*) and such directors as Martin Scorsese and Stanley Kubrick. This camera-stabilizing equipment allowed handheld shots to look

smooth and graceful. Fluidity of movement had been a Hollywood studio standard, but cameras in Hollywood's golden era (the thirties and forties) were enormously heavy and clumsy, making handheld camera moves jerky and untenable.

Outdoor filming was common for silent films, but the advent of sound in the late twenties complicated matters. The placement of booms and microphones became key, and filming outside the studio lot was a challenge, since ambient sound was difficult to control and background noise could ruin takes. Postwar Italian filmmakers circumvented these limitations by shooting silent and dubbing in the sound later—and the dubbing facilities at Rome's massive, Mussolini-built studio, Cinecittà, were peerless. But the Italians weren't the only ones: a good deal of sound in golden-era Hollywood films was edited in as an effect during postproduction, from the taps made by Fred Astaire's shoes to dialogue "looped" by actors to enhance the perfect take.

The net effect of postwar technological advances was to allow filmmakers to go from the confines of soundstages and studio lots to far-flung locations. The breakdown of the studio system after the 1948 Hollywood antitrust decision (the Paramount Decree), which split the studios from their theater chains, also sped the process along, because producers were no longer trying to find work for contract players and staff.

When it comes to sound, director Robert Altman introduced overlapping dialogue in his films, and shot the music and singing live in *Nashville* (1975)—a radical break from classic Hollywood, in which orchestration and singers' voices were always recorded separately from the image. By the end of the seventies, fiction film was looking a bit rougher around the edges; the "perfect" shot was no longer one in which the camera is discreet, subtle, and smooth, and the soundtrack was a velvety backdrop.

Lighting and production design were changing as well. The heavily overlit look of studio filmmaking was becoming passé: light no longer poured down from hundreds of high-powered bulbs above a nonexistent ceiling, eliminating obstructing shadows and directing audience attention to salient details. Natural light and weathered props, invisible makeup and worn-in costumes became the new ideal.

Critical Condition: For the Love of Movies and the Imminent Death of American Movie Criticism

AS A VETERAN FILM CRITIC for the *Boston Phoenix*, Gerald Peary has been a frequent presence at the Provincetown International Film Festival and a welcome one. Last year at the festival, he unveiled his new documentary, *For the Love of Movies: The Story of American Film Criticism*, and it couldn't have been more timely. In the United States, film critics are under siege: Newspapers and magazines, in serious economic decline, are firing them, and while Internet outlets for critics are multiplying, the vast majority of voices online are essentially ignorant of the art form, and almost no blogs or Web sites afford a living wage—especially the intellectually challenging ones. The moviegoing audience is fragmenting into niche markets and new media and is informed by advertising and word of mouth. Film critics continue to put their opinions out there, but fewer and fewer people pay any attention.

Peary, in *For the Love of Movies* (now available on DVD exclusively at www.fortheloveofmovies.net), does a superb job summing up the history of film criticism, from its earliest beginnings, with Frank Wood, co-screenwriter of *The Birth of a Nation*, to its peak in the sixties and seventies, and then does an equally fine summary of the trends leading to its current threat of extinction. He covers one of the biggest critical rivalries, between the *New Yorker's* Pauline Kael and the *Village Voice's* Andrew Sarris, fairly and in depth. (I say fairly, because I think he's much kinder to Kael and her followers than he needed to be; her scholarship was always shoddy, and after her disastrous attempt in 1979 to be a consultant at Paramount Pictures, her lack of integrity became obvious.) The other notable figures of American criticism, from James Agee to Bosley Crowther to Stanley Kauffmann to Manny Farber to Roger Ebert and his Chicago cohort Gene Siskel, are covered with a showman's sense of passion and drama and a journalist's sense of conciseness and relevance. Peary gives the sexism in his profession a good hearing, and touches on its racism with Elvis Mitchell (expanding on it in the excellent DVD bonus material with Mitchell and the *Boston Globe's* Wesley Morris)—though he mostly ignores the homophobia that was unabashed until recently, among highbrow and lowbrow critics alike.

In a mere eighty minutes, Peary does more than give an overview of criticism and the moviegoing experience—he honestly and persuasively conveys why people devote so much of their lives to the medium. He does this by canvassing a broad spectrum of critics today (Sarris and Molly Haskell, Richard Schickel, A. O. Scott, Kenneth Turan, Jonathan Rosenbaum, and Harry Knowles), as well as some filmmakers (John Waters, Richard Linklater, and Penelope Spheeris), and mixing in a judicious amount of archival material and a wealth of great clips from a range of work wide enough to include *Psycho*, *Diabolique*, *King Kong*, *Titanic*, *The Passion of Anna*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Fight Club*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Permission for those clips must have cost Peary a pretty penny, but they're worth it—he only uses them to illustrate or accentuate the points of his speakers or his narrative. Actress Patricia Clarkson is a pleasant narrator, but after watching an interview with Peary in the bonus DVD footage, I wish he'd narrated the whole film himself: he does an extraordinary job of making a discussion of film art accessible and friendly, in a rarefied world where arrogance (and now desperation) are common. —HK



GERALD PEARY



BJORK IN LARS VON TRIER'S DOGME-STYLE FILM, *DANCER IN THE DARK*



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(LEFT) HANDHELD SHOOTING, NEW WAVE STYLE. JEAN-PIERRE LEAUD IN FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT'S *THE 400 BLOWS*; (RIGHT) "BIG EDIE" AND "LITTLE EDIE" BOUVIER BEALE IN THE MAYSLES BROTHERS DOCUMENTARY, *GREY GARDENS*



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The direction of this aesthetic is clear: fiction film was trying desperately to shed its artificiality and look like a documentary. Audiences were lured by movies that appeared to be "captured," not meticulously constructed.

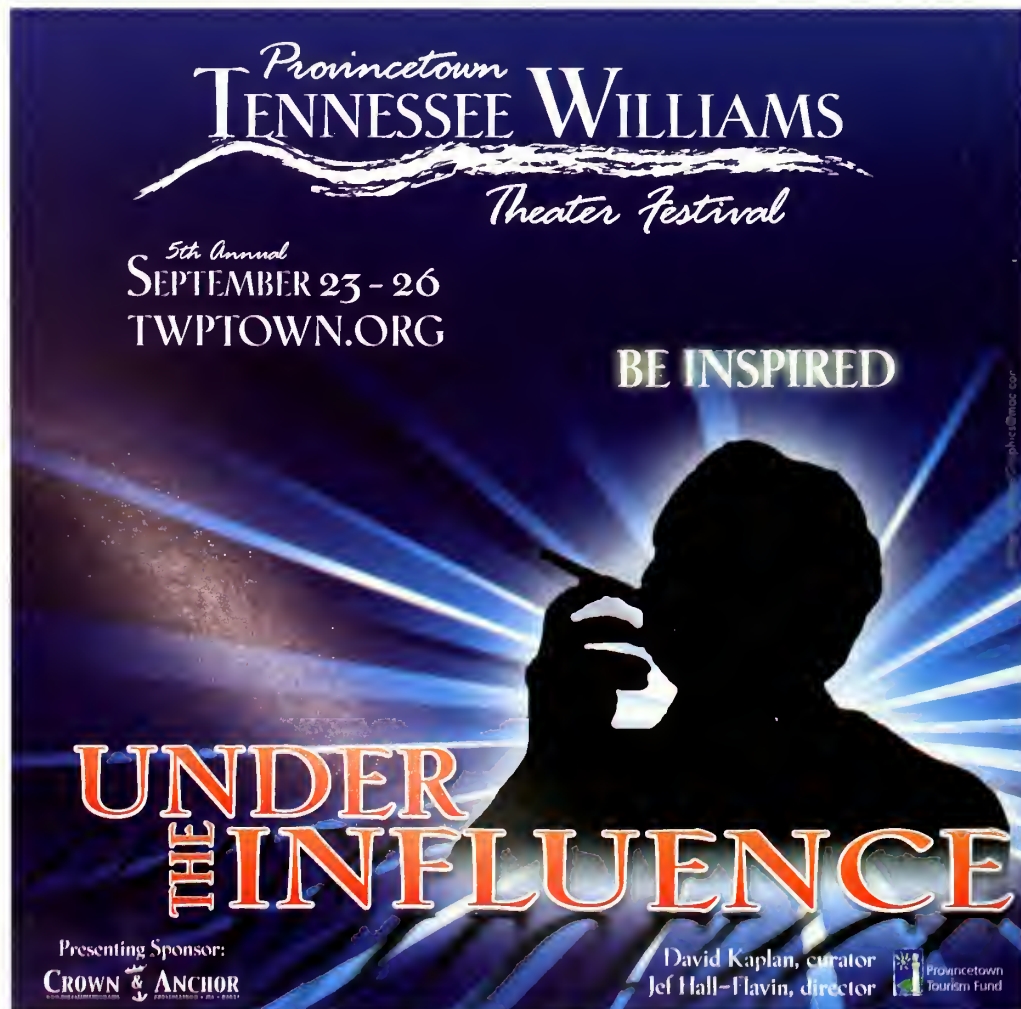
Which is not to say that artifice was dead. Flashy editing, zooms, jump cuts, surreal and dream images—self-conscious style and the realm of fantasy were as important as they ever were. Fantasy, however, can only exist in contrast to an accepted form of reality; it has to break the rules that are ascribed to the real world. The basic standard of movie illusion—the way that images on-screen are understood to be either real or fantasy—was updating, and the direction

in which it was heading was unequivocally toward documentary film.

Theorists have debated the mechanical "reality" of movie illusion—and how it becomes film art—throughout the history of cinema. In the early days of the Soviet Union, Sergei Eisenstein argued that Marx's historical dialectic had to be incorporated into the very structure of film editing. Shots had to be seen in conflict with one another—corresponding to the class struggle—and the end product, a montage, would create a politically correct "reality." Eisenstein's classic Odessa Steps sequence, in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), is a case in point: the tsar's soldiers and protesting peasants are shot at contrasting angles and intercut, and the culminating massacre is shot straight-on. At the same time, Eisenstein was obsessed with the clarity and efficiency of early Hollywood storytellers, especially D. W. Griffith (who was no Marxist). He revered classic Hollywood style almost as much as he hoped to revolutionize it.

The German theorist Rudolf Arnheim insisted in the thirties that in order to be deemed a work of art a movie had to defy its mechanical realism. In other words, it was only in the ways that a movie distorted, truncated, or sublimated the image that it could be considered aesthetic: simply presenting a chair, say, as a chair was not enough. It had to be a symbol of something else, or its image would have to be transformed, through cinematic means, into something other than its mechanical, physical depiction.

Less simplistic than Arnheim was the French theorist Andr  Bazin, who celebrated cinematic reality. The wonder and essence of film, Bazin argued, was to be found in that mechanical connection to the real world. To defy it (as Eisenstein and Arnheim proposed) was to diminish the medium's inherent value. For example, Bazin liked long takes—even 360-degree pans—that preserve the integrity of cinematic space. His famously cited example, a film in which a boy is being chased by a lion, illustrated the power of that basic movie illusion. Show the boy and the lion *in the same shot*, Bazin explained, and the audience will be much more likely to believe he is in danger. If the proximity between them is created by cutting—boy, lion, boy, lion—then the audience will quickly sense that the two are not really in



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the same space, and the illusion loses its power. Bazin felt that a realistic depiction of a film's subject is necessary, no matter how artificial that subject is. He extolled the approach Laurence Olivier took in shooting *Henry V*, for example, because instead of adapting the theatrical aspects of Shakespeare's play into something more cinematic, Olivier frames it as an actual performance before an audience. By realistically presenting the play as artifice, he preserved the essence of both theater and film.

In the seventies and eighties, when structuralism and semiotics dominated film theory, the gist of Bazin's point got lost in the shuffle. Structuralist thinkers were looking more broadly at the system of cinematic communication, and the illusion of cinematic "texts" within that system. They saw our understanding of reality in film in the way a linguist sees meaning in language: as a societal structure, using political or psychoanalytic theory to trace its sources.

Meanwhile, major changes were going on in the documentary sphere. The development of lightweight, portable cameras had given rise to the *cinéma-vérité* movement, in which filmmakers such as Frederick Wiseman, D. A. Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, and the Maysles brothers pretended to be flies on the wall, observing for hours and days and weeks on end, capturing as neutrally as possible what was before them: a mental hospital, a political campaign, a cast recording session for the musical *Company*, the Beale sisters at home in East Hampton. *Vérité* filmmakers often acknowledged their own presence, as if to underline that nothing was hidden or repressed in delivering the spectacle on-screen.

Despite its high profile and theoretical purity, *cinéma vérité* never supplanted more traditional documentary approaches. Filmmakers such as Errol Morris (*The Thin Blue Line*) continue to go the opposite way, emphasizing how footage is staged, with starkly lit interviews and carefully choreographed visuals, as if to rebut the idea that being an invisible observer produces impartial results. Ironically enough, the most ubiquitous heir to *cinéma vérité* is the so-called "reality" television series (*Survivor*, *Jersey Shore*, *Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew*). Although these shows are anything but neutral—they're brazenly manipulated to heighten the drama—they employ many of the same techniques devised by the pioneers of the sixties to deliver a sense of authenticity.

Documentary filmmaking, as always, reverted to the methods of fictional storytelling in order to reach a wide and often apathetic audience. Likewise, the desire for that same authenticity in fictional storytelling has led filmmakers to embrace ever more assiduously the methods of documentarians.

In 1995, a group of mostly Scandinavian filmmakers unveiled the Dogme 95 Manifesto, which dictated an approach to filmmaking that perfectly encapsulates the theories of Bazin and other realists in the cinema. Among the rules set out by Dogme: all shooting must be on location, with no props or sets; all sound must be recorded with images, and no music should be added; all lighting must be natural; all camera

movement must be handheld; all action must be in the present; no genre story lines or gratuitous violence should be used.

While very few noteworthy films have actually gone through the Dogme 95 Collective's certification process, its influence has been pervasive. Besides the films of Dogme poster boy Lars von Trier (*Breaking the Waves*, *Dancer in the Dark*), Dogme rules can be seen at work in the movies of the Dardenne brothers (*Rosetta*, *Le fils*, *L'Enfant*), Laurent Cantet (*The Class*), and Paul Greengrass (*The Bourne Supremacy*, *United 93*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*), who has worked on big-budget films from Hollywood studios.

Indeed, this is not just an art-movie phenomenon. The handheld, seemingly distracted camera movements in such TV action series as *NYPD Blue* are lifted straight from *cinéma vérité*. Even sitcoms have started to use documentary technique, in a satirical way: *The Office* and *Parks and Recreation* on NBC and *Modern Family* on ABC are send-ups of reality series, with characters looking at the camera self-consciously and giving interspersed testimonials. This form of comedy arose from Rob Reiner's "mockumentary" *This Is Spinal Tap* and the subsequent Christopher Guest features *Waiting for Guffman*, *Best in Show*, and *A Mighty Wind*. Documentary conventions have become so integrated into the overall style of shooting fiction that audiences are able to enjoy the satirical confusion between what's "real" and what's improvisational nonsense.

The underlying irony goes deeper. Fictional movies that employ documentary techniques are painstakingly crafted to appear spontaneous and "captured." But they're still fiction. Documentary films that are structured like stories, that employ reenactments and scripts, are carefully constructed—even imagined—like fiction, to achieve a specific effect. Yet they're still documentaries. Which one speaks the truth?

The truth is that the movie image, despite its mechanical birth, is still a substitute for reality, a mere reflection, and one that can be adjusted and altered in infinite ways. Moviegoers have a strong faith in that mechanical process, one that has been evolving since the invention of photography so many years ago. It may be, as Bazin thought, that realism is the essence of film art. Most definitely, it's the source of the movie image's power and popularity.

Realism, and the documentary techniques that produce it, satisfy a deep-seated need. In ever-increasing ways, they have come to dominate the way filmmakers work and the way film artists express their ideas and feelings. Even though the newest 3-D blockbusters are filled with outlandish animated fantasy, the impulse to present that fantasy in 3-D expresses that same deep-seated need to make the spectacle more tangible, more real, more believable. That's the paradox of illusion. That's show biz.

HOWARD KARREN is a former editor of *Premiere Magazine* and a co-owner of the Alden Gallery in Provincetown. He studied semiotics at Brown University and got his MFA in Film from Columbia University's School of the Arts.



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Orpheus in the Galleries

BY DAVID KAPLAN

THE FIFTH PROVINCETOWN Tennessee Williams Theater Festival is titled *Under the Influence*. For four days—from September 23 to 26—plays written by Williams will be performed with a complement of poetry, music, films, paintings, and other writers' plays that influenced Tennessee Williams as he wrote. New work will be performed, too: dances, plays, and music influenced by Williams. At the core of this year's programming is Williams's play *Orpheus Descending*.

Orpheus in the Galleries—a ticketed event at the festival this fall—is an installation of related artwork at neighboring Provincetown galleries in the northeast corner of the town. At the Berta Walker Gallery, DNA, and artSTRAND, paintings, sculpture, video, and other media will echo the myth of the poet who visits the underworld and returns to share a vision of loss—a poet whose own death by dismemberment gains him reunion with the spirit of love.

Orpheus in the Galleries opens on the customary gallery-going Friday night, on the week of the Festival: September 24. Ticket holders will be invited to make their own paths—and timetables—between gallery shows of individual artists, as well as environments created by artists where visitors may linger or pass through. Those participating include Varujan Boghosian, Sky Power, Jay Critchley, Jim Peters, Kathline Carr, and John Choly.

Williams ran a marathon of six decades chasing the theme of Orpheus. He began in the late 1930s with the play titled *Battle of Angels*, in which an itinerant blues guitar player visits a Mississippi Delta town, brings love to its women, and is lynched by its men. The play was optioned for Broadway, with a Boston tryout. In 1940 Williams summered in Provincetown to polish his draft, but the Boston run that December was disastrous. An overwrought smoke effect during the final scene sent the opening night audience fleeing out the aisles. *Orpheus Descending* is the 1957 revision, but before that, in 1952, Williams wrote a poem titled "Orpheus Descending."

The memorable opening lines:

They say that the gold of the under kingdom weighs so
that heads cannot lift beneath the weight of their crowns

continue to Williams's reflection on the poet's failure to rescue his beloved from hell:

and it will not be completed,
no, it will not be completed,

for you must learn, even you, what we have learned,
that some things are marked by their nature to be not completed
but only longed for and sought for a while and abandoned.

The 1957 play was poorly received by critics who mistook its stage poetry for melodrama, and belittled its images of sacrificial pain with homophobic Freudian psychology. Even so, the playwright's popularity was such that a Hollywood film based on the play was inevitable. Williams himself, assisted by Meade Roberts, wrote the screenplay, now titled *The Fugitive Kind*. Starring Marlon Brando and Anna Magnani, it premiered in 1960.

Not yet done with the subject, Williams worked throughout the 1970s on an autobiographical play eventually titled *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, set in 1940 Provincetown, in which he depicts himself under pressure from his producers—who arrive on the dunes by helicopter!—to rewrite the ending of his Orpheus text. The movie star meant to headline the production quotes a speech she has already memorized. Williams quotes himself from *Orpheus Descending*:



TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, 1971 PHOTO BY EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES

There's something still wild in this country, this country used to be wild, the men and the women were wild and there was a wild sort of sweetness in their hearts, for each other, but now it's sick with neon, it's broken out sick, with neon like most other places. . . . I'll wait outside in my car. It's the fastest thing on wheels in Two River County.

That car might be fast, but the guitar player doesn't leave in it.

Several other plays to be shown in September reflect on the story. Among them, a short one-act written by Williams in the mid-1930s, titled *Escape*, in which a black chain gang, tense with anticipation and dread, listens to a jailbreak. The same running away is overheard outside a window in *Orpheus Descending*. The guitar player cheers on the convict's flight from a pack of furiously pursuing dogs. The chain gang knows better than to cheer. As Williams put it in the concluding lines of his 1952 poem:

Now Orpheus, crawl, O shamefaced fugitive, crawl
back under the crumbling broken wall of yourself,
for you are not stars, sky-set in the shape of a lyre,
but the dust of those who have been dismembered by Furies!

The artists involved with *Orpheus in the Galleries* have their own understandings of the myth. Boghosian's long engagement with the story of Orpheus was the cover story of last year's *Provincetown Arts*.

Love visited in hell was, in part, the inspiration for Sky Power's mural painted for last year's Tennessee Williams Festival on the back wall of the Paramount Room of the Crown & Anchor. The text performed on the shallow low stage was a version of Williams's play *Clothes for a Summer Hotel*, in which F. Scott Fitzgerald (acted by Jeff Zinn) visits his wife, Zelda (played by Broadway legend Betty Buckley), in the North Carolina asylum where Zelda would later burn to death.

Power's response to the play came in stages, at first to the words describing two lovers ("the blades of your bones carved into mine"), then to the practical requirements of stage directions (the asylum gate, a tower, stairs, a fiery sunset), then a further understanding of the mural as a parallel expression of the play's melding of present,



SKY POWER, MURAL FOR "GHOSTS FROM A SUMMER HOTEL" BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, CONCERT READING IN PROVINCETOWN, MA, 2009, ACRYLIC AND LATEX ON SHEETROCK AND WOOD, 7 BY 25 FEET

past, and future. In the garden of the asylum, watched over upstage center by an unsympathetic nurse in medicinal white, Zelda and Scott revisit a Riviera hotel in their memories, and Zelda foresees her own death. As Power's mural progressed, the illustrating details of stair steps, tower, and gate were obliterated with a wet rag. Only a hawk escaped the wreckage. The result on the wall was a molten browned red pouring over the indentations of the door frames and into the corners of the stage. The paint still seemed wet and dripping, not so much backdrop, but another element in the narrative line, as the implications of the glow and the disintegration of form became more and more connected to the revelations of the text building a bridge between the heaven of memory and the fires of an inevitable future in hell. The production was accompanied by music from the original Broadway score, played live by

its composer, Michael Valenti. Power's notes on the work in process:

Tennessee Williams is a writer who appeals to my sensibilities—rich, deep, full of our human grit. I see orange-red as the core of the monochromatic theme. We will need to use the other ends of that color spectrum to convey the depth: yellow and a purple brown.

Her last note on the process:

Today, I am rolling out latex yellow, and red (as a base color to keep the violet from looking muddy). As I talked with David in the beginning, the color range will be violet and yellow, creating tones that include both colors. The yellow will predominantly be in a strip across the upper edge of the rectangular wall representing light (fire) in the distance.

The violet will be painted with large brush strokes and applied with a rag over the red. I want that area to be massive, foreboding, and a dark background for the nurse in white.

It was.

DAVID KAPLAN is the curator and a cofounder of the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival and author of the book *Tennessee Williams in Provincetown*. More information about festival activities is available at tuftown.org.

THE EXCERPT FROM THE POEM "ORPHEUS DESCENDING" IS TAKEN FROM THE COLLECTED POEMS OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, PUBLISHED BY NEW DIRECTIONS PUBLISHING CORPORATION, COPYRIGHT ©1954 BY THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

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The Other Ms. Clinton

BY STEVE DESROCHES

NOT LONG AFTER ELECTION DAY 2008, comedian Kate Clinton found herself at a rather snooty party in Manhattan with her partner, Urvashi Vaid. While many were ecstatic about Barack Obama's victory, the devastating blow dealt to equality by the passage of Proposition 8 in California tempered the celebration and the idea that America was truly ready to begin an era of progressive politics. In short, gays and lesbians were pissed. That's why when a heterosexual woman, of the clenched-jaw variety, approached Clinton and Vaid to talk politics, it was clear, at least to most, that starting a conversation about Proposition 8 would most likely be a bad idea.

"So," the women said rather blindly, "what happened in California?"

Vaid got within inches of the woman's face. "Straight people refused to recognize the moral equality of gay people," replied Vaid, who had made a name for herself as the director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, an author, and a sharp political commentator.

The woman repeated the line slowly, as if trying to commit it to memory. "I'll have to remember that," she said, sliding back into the cocktail party.

"And that is when I knew I would always have a job," Clinton said.

Clinton told that story throughout her 2009 "Yes on K8" tour of the United States and Canada, with several months worth of dates in Provincetown. Perhaps no story better encapsulates the essence of her work as a performer, writer, and citizen. Clinton is the grain of sand in the cog of a machine that seeks to steamroll liberalism and equality. But she also takes the role of the court jester, shining a line on the hypocrisy, and often times the just plain old lunacy, of the current American right wing.

"We are inundated with information and we can't put it all into context," said Clinton of modern life and the saturation of news, opinion, and political spin. "That's the job of the comic: to put things into context. Humor does that."

For almost thirty years Clinton has toured the country with her unique brand of comedy anchored in feminism, LGBT activism, and a steadfast belief in progressive politics. While not necessarily defining herself by a specific genre of comedy, Clinton can't help but focus on observations of the experiences of politically vulnerable people whose lives are deeply affected by the whims, ambitions, and prejudices of those in power. The very act of being an out lesbian as a comedian was a statement in itself when Clinton began in the 1980s.



KATE CLINTON

"It was perceived as political," she said. In fact, many comedy club managers asked her not to perform any gay material. However, over time, that changed. As gays and lesbians achieved more acceptance, the materials that became taboo shifted.

"One of the most interesting reactions I've received was in West Palm Beach," she said. "It was the year of the Bush 'selection.' Here I am in Florida after their botched 2000 election. The political material made them so tense, they seemed relieved when I started talking about gay stuff. Religion and politics are now what managers ask you to stay away from. They want the gay material."

If Clinton's work is received as rebellious, it's because her life in comedy came out of a transformative series of experiences that made her feel both free and angry. Professionally, Clinton began her working life as a high school English teacher. Upon personally accepting she was a lesbian, she searched for something different in her life and participated in the Women's Writers Conference in Cazenovia, New York. Writers like Rita Speicher, Olga Broumas, and Rita Mae Brown changed not only the way Clinton thought about herself and her future, but also how she viewed life.

"They didn't trust me because I was still

wearing Liz Claiborne," said Clinton of her feminist classmates. "I went to college before Women's Studies existed. So I started to read all the women I missed. No one ever told me to read Zora Neale Hurston. Can you imagine?!"

It was then that she decided to leave teaching and pursue comedy and writing.

"My father said to me 'I want you to be happy, but are you going to have health insurance,'" remembered Clinton.

Her training and time as a teacher served her well in New York City's comedy clubs. Every day she had to entertain and keep the attention of eleventh- and twelfth-grade students—the same ones day after day. Having different audiences each night actually seemed a bit easier. The boom of comedy clubs in the 1980s and the subsequent boom of gay and lesbian visibility in the 1990s led to increased success and inspiration. But it is really Provincetown that gave Clinton a home court, if you will. First performing in Provincetown in 1984, she used the town as her comedic laboratory.

"A huge part of my creative life is about Provincetown," said Clinton. "New York City is the office; Provincetown is really home. There's a basic

feeling of relaxing and that makes all the creative stuff happen."

With so much of her material focusing on politics and current events, there can be an added challenge connecting with the audience, when so many are on vacation. The job is to remind them of the world outside, sometimes delivering news to them they hadn't heard while lying on the beach or sipping cocktails at the Boatslip, and then make them laugh. Sometimes, she said, that makes the summer Provincetown shows more like a news program rather than a comedy show.

"It may sound corny, but I am so grateful for being able to perform and write in Provincetown," said Clinton. "I can have an idea in the morning, write it out, perform it that night, and get instant feedback. Provincetown audiences will go with you wherever you want to go. When you are given that kind of freedom you can really get to great places."

STEVE DESROCHES is a journalist and writer based in Provincetown. He completed his master's degree at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University in 2002. Desroches is currently working on a book of essays.

Tim Miller: Weaving Our Hearts and Social Bodies

BY PHILIP GAMBONE

DURING THE EARLY NINETIES, I spent four summers—in one May-to-September rental after another—in Provincetown. In addition to working on a novel, I was busy filing arts reviews for *Bay Windows*, Boston's LGBT newspaper; wrote press releases for the Ellen Harris Gallery; ran a series of Friday night readings at the FAWC given by gay and lesbian writers; and hosted an hour-long radio show on WOMR, where I interviewed and tape-recorded those same writers the next morning.

Of all the many memories I have from those summers, one of the most vivid is the evening when performance artist Tim Miller brought his newest piece, *My Queer Body*, to town. That night, August 29, 1993, Town Hall was packed with people gathered to see cutting-edge queer theater. We had all heard about this show, Miller's funny, raucous, beautiful, and sometimes naked homage to the stories that our bodies carry. We wanted to participate in that charged, transgressive energy and to be in the presence of one of the fearless, front-line soldiers in the culture wars of those years.

Miller was then in the midst of a long battle with the National Endowment for the Arts over its withdrawal of his 1990 fellowship. As he later recounted in his book *Body Blows*, his fellowship had been overturned "under slimy political pressure from the Bush White House because of the lush, wall-to-wall homo themes of my creative work." Along with three fellow artists, whose fellowships had also been pulled—the so-called "NEA 4"—Miller sued the federal government, a case that eventually made it all the way to the Supreme Court.

During Miller's electric, hour-long performance, we laughed and wept, hooted and hollered as he took us through "the intimate pleasures and pains of being in our bodies in these difficult and juicy times." We were in the midst of the AIDS crisis then. His brave, audacious paean to the centrality of the body was a bracing, uplifting message that we needed to hear. As the piece crescendoed to its ecstatic manifesto—"I will not be cast out of Paradise by Jesse Helms or some fucking hunky archangel with a flaming sword in front of some garden"—we jumped to our feet, wildly applauding.

FIFTEEN YEARS LATER, I spend an afternoon with Miller in the book-crammed, bohemian-funky house in Venice Beach, California, that he shares with his partner, the novelist

Alistair McCartney. It's hard to believe that Miller is in his early fifties. With his easy smile and riot of curly hair, he seems as fit and youthful as on that evening at Town Hall so many summers ago. Miller has likened himself to "a self-conscious, queer *Candide*," a "resilient road-company Peter Pan," and indeed there is something perennially boyish, though also fiercely cultivated, about him. Miller's brave willingness to descend, Orpheus-like, into the dark underworld of feelings and emotions, to chart the "emotional, spiritual, sexual, and political topography of my identity as a gay man" is his hallmark as an artist.

Perhaps he learned this resilience from his boyhood and teenage years as an amateur gardener. When I comment on the beautiful cascades of bougainvillea and California jasmine in his backyard, he says that as he was growing up he "didn't get conventional male learning. The message I got was, 'A man plants trees, plants jasmine around the house.' Nature has so many gracious and harsh lessons: the eater and the eaten, life and death. It's still such a charged thing for me. Every night, it's almost the last thing I think about.

If I'm home, there's not a day I don't dig."

But when exactly is he home? Now in his fourth decade as a performance artist, Miller is still very much in demand. He once calculated, "If I continue to tour as a performer for another twenty years, I will end up sleeping in at least 1,000 hotel beds in my lifetime on the road. For maximum poetic oomph, let's say 1,001 beds!" This summer one of those beds will be in Provincetown, where Miller returns in late August for a one-night engagement at the Provincetown Art House. He'll bring his latest performance piece, *Lay of the Land*, which explores "this challenging time in our national life" when the same-sex marriage is being hotly debated and contested. (He will also lead a one-week Performance Workshop in Provincetown under the sponsorship of the Truro Center for the Arts.)

"Though it is very disheartening," Miller says, "that so many states want to permanently enshrine bigotry in their Constitutions by denying gay folks civil marriage rights," he acknowledges "the bright side," where a civil marriage revolution is unfolding in several states and foreign countries. "I'm especially excited to be doing this piece here in a free state like Massachusetts."

TIM MILLER GREW UP in Whittier, California, which he calls "a kind of low-rent Garden of Eden with a K-Mart nearby."

"My mom would hate that, the low rent part," he tells me. Throughout our three hours together, he will blend dry wit, vivid storytelling, and keen aesthetic analysis into a savory conversational cocktail.

Being cast naked out of paradise—"the Ur-drama of Western civilization"—is, he notes, what so much of his work deals with. "That feeling of exile, that something's not right, it's what lots of gay people feel: that we are, in fact, perfect creatures—and flawed, as all human beings are—who have been wrongly cast out, trying to find our way back, which informs our ghetto culture, the way we gather, the way we relate to cities."

As a boy, Miller began to construct his own "private queer boy Utopia," not only in his garden but also in a backyard tree house, to which he would invite other boys, hoping they would join him in naked play. He loved to take his clothes off in that tree house or in a sequestered part of the lawn, where he would lie naked in the warm southern California



TIM MILLER IN *LAY OF THE LAND* PHOTO BY LEU GARCIA

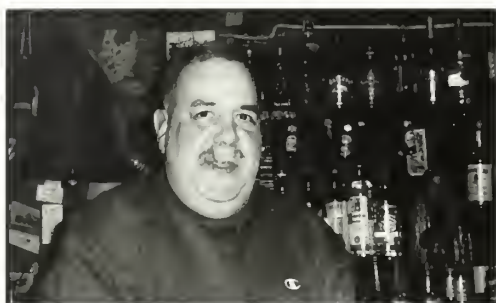
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sun. He saw every part of himself, "in an almost Whitmanic way, as worthy of light, worthy of witness, worthy of pleasure."

"Performance itself is a kind of paradise-creation venture," he says. "Theaters are one of the only spaces where we can actually have naked bodies, other than Herring Cove Beach and Blacks Beach and Baker Beach, and the dozen or so other, usually hard-to-get-to nude beaches."

During high school, Miller did a lot of theater and dance. He also joined the school's Great Books Club, which, he writes in his memoir, *Shirts & Skin*, "was the collecting point for all the artists, homosexuals, drug dealers, and cross-dressing glitter-rock believers." In addition to reading and discussing "the crucial texts"—sophomore year, his favorite book was Rousseau's *Confessions*—Miller and his classmates would carpool into Hollywood to watch foreign art films and "hang out with the demimonde. We were pretending to be degenerates when we were really good kids. Other than being in plays, the club really dominated my life."

It was on one of those Book Club outings that Miller saw his first gay pride parade. "I was fourteen or fifteen. It was troubling and confusing. On another field trip, I remember seeing a very camp drag queen who waved at our bus as we drove down Hollywood Boulevard. It was exciting, scary, repulsive. It definitely wasn't my Mary Renault Apollonian ideal at all."

By senior year, Miller had figured out that he liked boys. "Sex was all I thought about. It was completely motivating my decisions." (He would hang around the public library, "leaning suggestively against the stacks in the psychology section, waiting to be picked up by some graduate student.") When he finally went on his first real date with another boy—an experience he poignantly and hilariously describes in "Tar Pit Heart," a chapter in his memoir *Shirts & Skin*—it was, he tells me, "that beautiful, human thing, when we finally break into that new erotic self! Grappling with this in 1975–1976 was different than just a few years before. There were gay things on TV. I knew what was going on, knew who Harvey Milk was." He ended up hitchhiking to San Francisco, where he got kidnapped by the Moonies, met a gay guy on the beach, and fell in love again.

"I was very romantic. I wanted sex, but sex with 'The Beloved.' In that way I was quite conventional, not an outlaw at all. That search

for social change came from gay liberation. By the late seventies, when I was finishing high school, what was really happening in this country was feminism and gay liberation. Suddenly queers and feminists were where the action was. I was drawn to the most extreme political dykes. I was neuter enough that I could almost pass as a lesbian. That's my real theme: the weaving of our hearts and social bodies."

After a brief stint at California State University, Fullerton—"a several-month-long passionate roller-coaster ride full of learning, emotional skill building, and sex"—Miller moved to New York, where, for a time, he studied with Merce Cunningham. "It was so depressing and uninteresting to me. The avant-garde was very closeted: Robert Wilson, Cunningham, John Cage, Rauschenberg. None of them had come out. There was no way Cunningham was going to live up to my expectations. He seemed extremely old to me. I got to have a glorious rejection of the master."

Soon Miller was attending improvisational dance and performance jams at Open Movement on Prince Street, "a safe place to meet men, make art, and grow up." In 1979, he and some of his dance buddies "liberated" an old abandoned school building and created Performance Space 122. Ambitious for notice in the New York art world, Miller was, by 1982, creating performance pieces like *Postwar*, which "combined crazed movement, complex multimedia, a little text, and lawnmowers to explore the anomie and horror of growing up in nuclear America as it collided with the first Reagan term." *Postwar* attracted international attention, which, Miller admits, "puffed up my twenty-three-year-old self to no end." A spectacular public breakup with his boyfriend at the time, trumpeted from the pages of the *Soho News* and *Village Voice*, and the equally spectacular public failure of his 1984 piece *Democracy in America*, left Miller feeling washed up. But, he notes, "more difficult things were being asked of us than bouncing back from bad reviews."

With the AIDS epidemic at full heat, and assuming that he would succumb to the disease, Miller found his subject. AIDS, he tells me, "sealed the deal. It became my subject, my Paris Commune. It was what that time was about. For my generation, it's unlikely that anything else will be as huge. It's hard for me to imagine anything else where my identity, my body, my politics, my energies would be quite so fully charged."

By now Miller had met Doug Sadownick, a gay writer, who would remain his life partner until 1995. "In some ways, Doug and I were a classic 1982 couple. We were scared. The idea was that the safest thing to do was to get a partner and batten down the hatches. The wisdom of that seemed solid at the time. For a good five years we were completely monogamous. To have your erotic life cut short in your twenties is a drag."

In *Buddy Systems* (1986), which he created with Sadownick, Miller returned with a "high-energy, stripped-down performance that relied on words, storytelling, and physical performance to make some sparks." It was during this period that his artistic vision solidified. "I was meeting the challenge, embracing what my work was going

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TIM MILLER IN *LAY OF THE LAND* PHOTO BY LEO GARCIA

to be about: my story as a queer man in these times and accepting that, which is what I have continued to explore."

Returning to Los Angeles in 1987—"fleeing," he has written, "the cold panic and tightening noose in New York"—Miller felt as if his world was in complete chaos. Nevertheless, he was able to put together his "first really confident, narrative, writerly piece," *Some Golden States*. He was also becoming involved in ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, the organization founded in 1987, which was mounting protests and other actions in several cities around the country. He participated in numerous demonstrations that called for the funding of AIDS research and treatment. "Wild, kinky raves," he once wrote, "where many hundreds would gather for politics, performance and priapism." He was arrested twice and beaten up once by the police.

"ACT UP was my graduate school. The late 1980s begins a really interesting and charged period of multiculturalism in this country. Suddenly, especially in California, people were organizing their social visions and creative practice around identity—sexual, racial, class, and ability—which is really the world we still inhabit, as it's been shaped by people of color, feminists, queer people. An honorable lineage to be in. Most of what's not fucked up about this country comes from that, including our president right now. Only a country that's had twenty years of rigorous multicultural, political, and creative process could have elected Barack Obama."

Miller's direct action politics were reflected in Highways, the new performance space that he founded in 1989 in Santa Monica. In the first piece he premiered there, *Stretch Marks*, he incorporated a piece he had made for a demonstration at the County Hospital in East Los Angeles. "ACT UP and Highways were like two peas in a pod."

Miller calls the early nineties "a beautiful

period of romantic rebellion and reclaiming sex, which came back into play after panic and fear." (To his relief, he had tested negative for HIV in 1990.) He was teaching gay men's performance-art workshops and doing regular collaborations with Reverend Malcolm Boyd—"performance art sermons," he calls them—at St. Augustine by-the-Sea in Santa Monica. All the while, he "was notoriously being hassled by Jesse Helms."

In his essay in *Love, West Hollywood*, Miller calls Highways Performance Space the "prime target of the radical right as the most attacked arts organization in the United States." In 1990,

the "heat-seeking missiles" in the right-wing culture wars hit their target and his NEA grant was rescinded. When the Ninth Circuit Court ruled that the NEA's decency clause was unconstitutional, Miller got his funding back. (Subsequently, however, in ruling on a Justice Department appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1998 upheld the right of Congress to require the NEA to apply "general standards of decency" in awarding future grants.)

Miller says that even though the Justice Department appeal to the Supreme Court was routine, "that doesn't let Clinton off the hook. They could have derailed it and didn't. It would have been nice if he had been paying attention. Even in the Obama administration, there are still the old pretexts: we can't fund gay art, we can't fund controversial art, we can't have naked bodies. Nothing has changed. Individual artists don't get funding anymore under the NEA."

In the midst of the controversy, Miller premiered *My Queer Body* (1992), a piece he had begun by "trying to tell the story of my dick." While it is, he says, his "big naked piece," the nakedness is "almost the easiest part of self-revelation. There are so many more complicated things we reveal about ourselves: those least savory moments when you're not your best self, your kindest self. Those are much scarier." Indeed, Miller feels that the nudity in pieces like *My Queer Body* has been an easy pretext for "right-wing nuts" to trivialize and misrepresent his work.

In 1994, while he was performing at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, Miller met McCartney—"a gorgeous neo-Celtic grunge boy," as he describes him in *Shirts & Skin*. The two fell in love and McCartney moved to LA, an event that led to Miller's breakup with Sadownick the following year.

Miller's relationship with McCartney, an Australian national, threw him directly into the "Kafkaesque injustice" of U.S. policy with regard to

same-sex, binational couples. "To be a gay person in this country is to be in this ping-pong dance: you feel like you belong and then you realize that you are not a citizen, certainly if you're in a relationship with a foreign national. I'd give up all the voting rights to be able to have the marriage rights. Along with the NEA stuff, it's a huge part of my story. The immigration stuff is a billion times worse. My agency, my queer pursuit of happiness is being messed with again by our federal government."

Within the first few years of their relationship, Miller created another performance piece, *Glory Box*, to address "the vast buffet spread of heterosexual privilege" that he is denied as a gay person in a relationship with a foreign national. In the preface to the piece, he wrote that "the worst of my experiences as a poster boy during the culture wars doesn't hold a candle to the horrors of trying to live in the United States as a gay citizen in a binational relationship."

"*Glory Box* is a very feisty piece. I can do it in front of a bunch of frat boys and make it work. It's the piece I've done the most over the longest period of time. I've been the only performer really exploring this subject. It will be one of the pieces I'm most proud of."

By 2008, thirteen years after they became a couple, McCartney seemed to have run out of options for visa extensions and Miller began to prepare for a move to Australia in order for the two of them to stay together. At the last minute, McCartney got one more reprieve—"a political reward extended to Australians for their participation in Iraq." But the long-term future for them as a couple in the U.S. is still uncertain.

As we wrap up our conversation, the Utopian theme returns: "My writing exists to serve that Utopian paradisiacal possibility of coming together, whether it's at a college in Nebraska, or the Boston Center for the Arts. I love that there's a boy in rural Tennessee who is performing my pieces in high school speech contests. A lot of people do my work in speech contests. They're all gay boys."

I tell Miller that it's hard to believe that the "gay boy," as he frequently refers to himself in his performances, is now over fifty years old. "I feel incredibly fortunate to be alive," he tells me. "To get to feel the complex palette of feelings around getting older, when we know how much our friends [who died from AIDS] would have welcomed it. It's complicated, especially as gay men with all our youth stuff. When it comes down to it, I'm just feeling lucky to be here."

Is he working any thoughts about aging into his own pieces?

"Down the line there is that piece. I'm sure when I was forty I probably thought, Oh that's the piece I'll make when I'm fifty. Now that I'm fifty, that's the piece I'll make when I'm sixty. It's not the main thing I'm thinking about these days."

A former summer resident of Provincetown, PHILIP GAMBONE lives and writes in Boston. He teaches at Boston University Academy and in the writing program at the Harvard Extension School. His latest book is Travels in a Gay Nation: Portraits of LGBTQ Americans (University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

The Good- Time Music of Dick Miller

By Robert Henry



DICK MILLER AT PAAM

FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS, I have attended just about every performance in the “Music with Dick Miller” series at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, featuring Miller on piano, along with other musicians, playing and singing the traditional tunes that have come to be known collectively as the American songbook.

From street performers on Commercial Street, to the cabaret singers at the various clubs, Provincetown has had a long and varied musical history. In the mid twentieth century Nina Simone, Gerry Mulligan, Zoot Sims, and many other jazz artists regularly appeared at the Atlantic House. The Jug Band performed for about thirty years, and I can even remember sitting in the parlor of photographer John Gregory’s house in the West End listening to classical music on a “hi-fi” sound system when that technology was new and scarcely available. I can also remember listening to Lenny Metcalf playing piano and singing at Cookie’s Tap. The Blue Door chamber group is a resident group at PAAM. We even once had our own symphony orchestra under the leadership of Jo Hawthorn for a while. Now we have our own jazz festival, our chorus, open-mike nights.

If there is a thread that binds the many performers that have appeared at PAAM it is the “good-time feeling” that pervades the music. Dick, himself, can play in more than one style, but the piano of the swing era is where he is most at home. He was the pianist in Woody Allen’s band at Michael’s Pub for about twenty-five years, playing in a style that is basically spontaneous, improvised. Spontaneity is central; there is often no opportunity to rehearse for PAAM concerts. So it is as much a jam session as it is a concert.

Players are drawn from both Massachusetts and New York. Lou Colombo, Jimmy Mazzy, Marshall Wood, Billy Novick, and Dick Johnson are all Massachusetts based. They have combined in small combos of three or four with Joe Muranyi, Peter Ecklund, Marty Grosz, Dan Block, John Bucher, and Vince Giordano, from New York. They all share the love of music, and having fun. Muranyi, Grosz, Mazzy, and Novick are instrumentalists and vocalists. They share that distinctive timbre and feeling for phrasing that singers seem to have, along with a musicality that comes down the line from instrumentalist-vocalists such as Louis Armstrong. The Manhattan Rhythm Kings, who appeared twice, come out of a different tradition with their 1920s–40s style of close harmony singing, and their tap and soft-shoe dancing added in—still good-time entertainment, and a great success. Carmen Cicero, Marshall Wood, and Bruce Abbott bring yet another approach, rooted in progressive jazz.

Miller is generous as a person and as a musician. He loves to support others. He enjoys working with singers in developing their

approaches to performing, and he loves to support them with piano accompaniment. Blair Resika worked with Miller while she was developing a cabaret style and adding pop songs to her classical art song repertoire.

The list of vocalists that Miller has brought to Provincetown over the years is remarkable and varied. We have heard Barbara Lea, Nancy Harrow, and Samoa Wilson, all from New York, as well as the aforementioned Blair Resika and Cat Henry, Pavia, Stanley Wilson, Joanna Dean, Carol Wyeth, and Meredith D’Ambrosio, who are based locally. CDs, such as *Deep in a Dream*, which features the songs of Jimmy Van Heusen, with singer Barbara Lea, trumpeter Jon-Erik Kellso, and Miller, and *Blue Moon*, with vocals by Blair Resika, came out of these collaborations.

A film of the jazz series, *Cape Song*, made by the documentary filmmaker Veronica Selver (including performances of “Word Is Out,” “Raising the Roof,” and “KPFA on the Air”), was shown at the Provincetown Film Festival. It captured the spirit of the performances and recorded the connections between the music, the musicians, the social milieu, and even the landscape.

Dick Miller has been playing at various venues on the Cape and Islands for more than fifty years. For much of that time he played at local restaurants, which he really enjoyed. Perhaps people listened, maybe not. That was not a problem for him—he was taking pleasure in playing for people. About eight years ago, Miller found the continuing problem of finding restaurant gigs each year daunting, so he got the idea for the present series and proposed it to Robyn Watson, the director of PAAM at that time, and she was delighted. After all, Miller would take care of not only recruiting the musicians, but scheduling their appearances, and often feeding and housing them as well. And he was bringing to the community music that, like the visual arts collections and exhibitions at the museum, offered a living history of some of America’s most important twentieth-century art. Christine McCarthy, who succeeded Watson and is now the executive director, has continued to enthusiastically support the program.

There has always been a close connection between musicians and visual artists on the Cape. Both Dick Miller and Blair Resika are married to artists. Carmen Cicero is both a painter and an outstanding alto saxophonist. Dick and I periodically play piano and guitar duets in the privacy of his house. The list of others who have practiced both arts, now and in the past, is extensive.

The venue also supports the music. The galleries at PAAM have high ceilings, clean white walls typically lined with evenly spaced rectangles of color, and perhaps some pieces of sculpture. There is a piano at the middle of one of the long walls, where, even before

the concert begins, one finds Dick, relaxed, playing tunes. The good-time feeling has begun. The contrast between the formality of the setting and the informality of the presentation is striking.

On occasion, Miller will have an evening of solo performance. On those evenings, he will find some theme to tie the evening together, either by the titles of songs, or, as often as not, by composer. Miller is diffident by nature. He prefers to play rather than talk, but when it comes to the subject of music and of composers he has a lot to say. For years he has had the task of reading current books about music and selecting from among them candidates for the Deems Taylor Award given by ASCAP for the best writing on music each year. So, in addition to his natural inclination to do research about composers and musicians, he has been obliged to read about them. Not only can he remember the melody and chord changes of virtually every song he has ever heard, but he also has an encyclopedic knowledge of just about anything having to do with their composers and will often intersperse his performances with interesting and amusing anecdotes about them.

He has one clear favorite, Jimmy Van Heusen, with Fats Waller coming in a close second. The two composers are, of course, quite different from each other and each brings out a different aspect of Miller's playing and personality. Van Heusen wrote songs that are melodically appealing, harmonically inventive, and structurally complex. Waller, on the other hand, is about the energy and movement of the notes, and often the humor of the lyrics. There is something irresistible about stride piano, and Waller provides an opportunity for Miller to show off his stride style; energetic, athletic, buoyant. Van Heusen brings out his more pensive, lyrical side. The harmonies and melodies prevail. The left hand supports it all but in a different way. Miller hardly ever has a bassist either for solo or ensemble performances. This is probably not by choice but by necessity; but still, as he loves the role of supporter, I rather think that he enjoys working without a bassist. Of course when he plays with Marty Grosz, who is ebullient and is probably one of the best rhythm guitarists ever, Marty usurps the role of supplying the bass line.

Miller doesn't like to practice. At home he just plays songs that he knows and loves, and adds new tunes. I am sure that he must have practiced at one time—he could not have attained the level of proficiency that he has without some practicing—but nowadays he can play just about any tune in the repertoire at will, on the spur of the moment. He has the ear, the chops, and that encyclopedic familiarity with tunes so that he can get away with it. At a concert late last summer, one of the musicians called for a rarely played and very complicated song from the twenties, "Mabel's Dream." But there it was at his fingertips; he remembered it exactly. I was impressed. Miller, with characteristic modesty, has talked about the limits of his chordal palette, but it seems to me that this is a chosen limitation. He and his collaborators are conservators: they are conserving the art of the past, and that chordal palette is a part of that tradition.

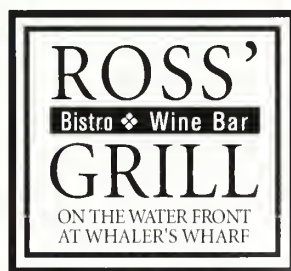
This feeling for tradition is embedded in life

experience. Miller has talked about his privileged upbringing, and he feels that his music reflects this. From early childhood there was always music at home. His father, an amateur violinist, played in string quartets, but also loved and listened to show tunes. Recordings of singers like Al Jolson and Bing Crosby were often played in the house. When Miller was in junior high school, Teddy Wilson came and played at his school. Now that is what I call privilege.

He was raised on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and went to Riverdale Country School and then to Wesleyan and Columbia Universities. Until he retired a few years ago, he taught in the English Department at Brooklyn College, CUNY. During college he started playing gigs, which at first consisted of playing popular songs in a bar.

A lifetime has gone by since then, filled with music. I treasure the experience of seeing Dick Miller at the piano, somewhat hunched over, intense, concentrated, his face almost expressionless; and then when something in the music delights or amuses him, I enjoy the smile of pure pleasure that appears. This contrast has been sharpened in recent years as his face has shown the effects of suffering from and combating cancer and the treatments that have gone along with that disease. He has performed throughout this ordeal, with a short hiatus at the end of one summer. His face, especially his eyes, holds this history. So when they light up the contrast is greater, brighter, and richer. And the music endures.

ROBERT HENRY is an artist and teacher living in Wellfleet. He is represented by the Berta Walker Gallery.



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Space, Silhouette, and Scale:

Innovations of Studio Jewelers in Provincetown in the 1940s and '50s

BY KELLY H. L'ECUYER

JEWELRY IS AN ANCIENT ART FORM, but the idea of art jewelry—jewelry as a self-conscious expression of individual artistic intent—is a modern one. A distinct invention of the early industrial era, art jewelry developed in the nineteenth century as part of a broader movement to promote artistic handcraft as an alternative to machine-driven mass production, and a symbol of individuality and personal expression. In the 1940s and 1950s, studio jewelry, born of this reform impulse, became a vibrant form of artistic practice in the United States that continues to flourish today. Several New York jewelers active in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in the mid-twentieth century were among the field's leading innovators who pioneered the development of jewelry as a branch of modern art.

Studio jewelers, then and now, are independent artists who handle their chosen materials directly to make one-of-a-kind or limited-production jewelry. Unlike sculptors or painters who occasionally design jewelry, these artists see jewelry as their primary work, and they both design and fabricate their own objects in private studios. As a consequence of this focus on the individual, studio jewelers favor self-expression and originality of design and concept over reproductions or revivals of past styles. They (and the wearers of their work) express criticism of what they perceive as the bland conventionality of mass-produced objects, and the ostentatious display of wealth in precious gemstone jewelry. They seek to make a new kind of adornment that privileges individual expression, nonconformity, and aesthetic and intellectual values.



HENRY STEIG (AMERICAN, 1918–1973), SUNBURST NECKLACE, c. 1955, SILVER AND QUARTZ. DIAMETER OF PENDANT IS 3½ INCHES, LENGTH OF CHAIN IS 20 INCHES.

IN THE FACE-TO-FACE world of the studio jewelry business in the mid-twentieth century, locating a shop in a supportive, artistically inclined environment was essential to success. New York City was a particularly important center for studio jewelry because of its status as the capital of modern art in the postwar world. Those involved in the city's intellectual and artistic milieu sought out contemporary studio jewelry to signify their association with forward-looking art and culture. Affordable modern jewelry also appealed to "college girls and young careerists," who might otherwise buy costume jewelry, as well as the city's artists, writers, designers, and academics.¹ Art historian Blanche Brown, for example, recalled that she was attracted to a wire spiral pin by Ed Wiener in 1947 because

it looked great, I could afford it, and it identified me with the group of my choice—esthetically aware, intellectually inclined, and politically progressive. That pin (or one of a few others like it) was our badge and we wore it proudly. It celebrated the hand of the artist rather than the market value of the material. Diamonds were the badge of the philistine.²

Several New York modernist jewelers found similar customers in the well-established artists' colony at Provincetown, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, when the painter Hans Hofmann held his famous painting school there in the summers. Like Hofmann's circle of New York painters, the jewelers Ed Wiener, Paul Lobel, Henry Steig, and Jules Brenner all hailed from New York, but spent summers in Provincetown. There they mingled with other artists and discussed ideas like "negative space, silhouette, scale and containment, texture, [and] volume" in relation to paintings, sculpture, and jewelry alike.³ At Wiener's shop at 197 Commercial Street, the painters Adolph Gortlieb, Barnett Newman, Chaim Gross, and Ward Bennett visited and, according to Wiener, were "willing to suspend a certain amount of taste to help a struggling young artist."⁴ The seaside town proved to be such an attractive place for jewelers to work that Steig closed his successful New York shop and moved to Provincetown full-time in 1963. Brenner, who had worked in Wiener's shop in the late 1940s and early 1950s before starting his own studio, made the same move a decade later.



ED WIENER (AMERICAN, 1918–1991), CUFF BRACELET, 1948, SILVER, 2¼ BY 4¼ BY 2½ INCHES

ED WIENER was among the most prolific of the New York studio jewelers, and also one of the first to open a shop in Provincetown, where he and his wife, Doris, started a summer studio in 1946. Wiener established a successful and decades-long career as a studio jeweler by mirroring a wide variety of styles in modern art and adapting them to designs for popular, wearable jewelry. The son of a butcher, Wiener discovered an aptitude for small-scale manual work while working on a radio assembly line during World War II. He approached jewelry making as a satisfying way to earn a living, and always emphasized that he made jewelry to adorn the human body, not as independent sculpture. Nevertheless, he borrowed design ideas freely from well-known modernist artists, and over the course of the 1940s through the 1960s, made pieces that reflected an array of styles: the geometric forms of Constructivism, the fragmented mask-like faces of Cubism, the amoeba shapes of biomorphic Surrealism, abstracted natural forms like seashells and starfish, and the streamlined, space-age style. One necklace of 1949 was constructed in much the same fashion as Calder's famous mobile sculptures: its horizontal silver bars were riveted together with wire links allowing each element to move freely. The necklace's textured and hand-hammered surfaces expressed Wiener's protest against what he called "dehumanization by the machine."⁵ Although he produced a number of designs

in quantity, Wiener also made original works in small series, each piece a slightly different variation of a theme, as in his *Abacus* brooch series. With its irregular, multicolored stone beads that move freely on fixed wires within a confining frame, *Abacus* explored what Wiener called a "controlled haphazardness." It was also Wiener's way of devising simple mounts for stones, and incorporating motion inspired by Calder's mobiles.⁶



PAUL LOBEL (AMERICAN, 1899–1983), NECKLACE, c. 1945, SILVER AND GOLD WIRE, DIAMETER OF PENDANT IS 2⅞ INCHES; LENGTH OF CHAIN IS 23 INCHES

IN PROVINCETOWN, many jewelers used basic techniques to make simple forms from sheet silver and wire, and their work was especially indebted to Alexander Calder's improvisational wire jewelry and sculpture. Their design motifs—wire spirals, abstracted starfish, and polished beach pebbles—served well as expressions of the informal and bohemian world of the seaside artists' colony, and their shops thrived on the personal contact between the jewelers and their artistic clientele. Like other studio jewelers of the period, they sustained their businesses by finding laborsaving ways to produce objects of consistent quality in multiples without resorting to assembly-line production. They chose materials that were durable and reasonably inexpensive, such as silver, copper, or brass instead of gold, and semiprecious stones instead of cut gemstones. Furthermore, they designed their jewelry to take advantage of commercially available metal supplies. Cuff bracelets were an especially common form, because they not only had a bold and modern look, but also could be shaped quickly from sawn metal sheet and needed no intricate closures.



ED WIENER (AMERICAN, 1918–1991), ABACUS BROOCH, c. 1950, SILVER AND SEMIPRECIOUS STONES

ALTHOUGH HE WAS only active in Provincetown between 1946 and 1950, Paul Lobel was an important mentor for several New York and Provincetown studio jewelers because he was an experienced and talented designer in many media. When he began making jewelry in the mid-1940s, he had already worked for years as an industrial designer and craftsman. For two decades he successfully designed furniture, interiors, glass products, book jackets, and decorative accessories for commercial production. He began to work with metal after his visit to the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in 1925. During World War II, material shortages forced him to consider working on smaller scale objects, and he opened a shop on West Fourth Street in Greenwich Village, where he made and sold jewelry. He also made small, abstracted sculptures of animals from silver wire and sheet, which were exhibited in "Shining Birds and Silver Beasts" at New York's American Museum of Natural History in 1949. His pendant with a profile of a horse relates to his animal sculptures and recalls the streamlined elegance of the Art Deco or "moderne" style popularized by the 1925 exposition.



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ART SMITH (AMERICAN, BORN IN CUBA, 1917–1982),
PATINA NECKPIECE, 1955, SILVER 10 7/8 BY 6 1/2 BY 3/4 INCHES

ART SMITH never maintained a shop in Provincetown, but he was a central figure in the Greenwich Village circle of studio jewelers and a friend of Paul Lobel. In the mid-1950s, Smith sold hundreds of pieces of his jewelry in Provincetown through Milton Hefling's boutique at 328 Commercial Street, including at least two of his dramatic *Patina* neckpieces. Smith occupied an unusual position as the only prominent African-American studio jeweler in the mid-twentieth century. In the early 1940s, when he was one of only four black students at the Cooper Union School of Art in New York, Smith apprenticed to jeweler Winifred Mason in Harlem. Through Mason, Smith became connected to the African-American arts community in New York. The stage jewelry and body ornaments he designed for black dance troupes led by Talley Beatty, Pearl Primus, and Claude Marchant influenced the large-scale theatricality of his studio jewelry, as well as its thoughtful relationship to the contours of the body. Designs like the *Patina* neckpiece, although imposing, are surprisingly comfortable and well-balanced when worn. Smith's jewelry is characterized by flowing organic forms that reflect the influence of Surrealism, as well as his own distinctive sense of scale, balance, and movement.

KELLY H. L'ECUYER is the Ellyn McColgan Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture, *Art of the Americas*, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This article is adapted from the forthcoming title *Jewelry by Artists: In the Studio 1940–2000*. Copyright © 2010 by Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Used by permission of MFA Publications. All objects illustrated were gifts to the MFA from the Daphne Farago Collection in 2006. Selections of jewelry from the Daphne Farago Collection will be installed in the Museum's new *Art of the Americas* Wing, opening in late 2010.

END NOTES

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